

**Articles and Sermons :: "CHRISTMAS â€“ CHRISTIAN OR PAGAN?" by Zac Poonen**

"CHRISTMAS â€“ CHRISTIAN OR PAGAN?" by Zac Poonen - posted by rlcchurch (), on: 2016/12/13 12:24

Hadn't seen this week's Word for the Week by Zac posted yet. Very timely...

Christmas â€“ Christian or Pagan?

by Zac Poonen

Men are likened to sheep. And sheep have a tendency to follow the crowd without questioning. Jesus however came and taught us to examine everything by God's word. The Pharisees exalted human traditions. Jesus exalted God's word. Man was to live by every word that proceeded from God's mouth (Matt. 4:4).

The battle that Jesus was constantly engaged in with the Pharisees was the age-long battle of God's Word versus human traditions. In the church, we are engaged in the same battle today. God's word is the only light that we have on earth. And when God created light initially, He immediately separated it from the darkness. The darkness is both sin as well as human traditions. We also are called to separate both of these from the pure word of God, so that there is no mixture in the church.

Consider Christmas, which is celebrated by many as the birthday of Jesus Christ. Shopkeepers of all religions look forward to Christmas, for it is a time when they can make much profit. It is a commercial festival, not a spiritual one. Millions of rupees are spent on Christmas cards and gifts. Sales of alcoholic drinks go up at this time. And the traffic police in many countries are kept on their toes, for there are never so many accidents on the roads there, as during the Christmas season. More people go to hell through road accidents at this time, than at any other time of the year.

Is this really then the birthday of the Son of God, or of another 'Jesus'?

Let us look at God's Word first of all. The Bible tells us that there were shepherds with their sheep out in the fields of Judaea, on the night that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The shepherds in Palestine did not keep their flocks out in the open fields at night after October and until February â€“ the weather being both rainy and cold then. So the real Jesus must have been born sometime between March and September. December 25th then must be the birthday of â€œanother Jesusâ€“ that has been foisted on an unsuspecting Christendom by Satan!

Further, even if we did know the exact date of Jesus' birth, the question would still be whether God intended His church to celebrate it. Mary, the mother of Jesus, would certainly have known the exact date of birth of Jesus. And she was with the apostles for many years after the day of Pentecost. Yet there is no mention anywhere of Jesus' date of birth. What does this show? Just this â€“ that God deliberately hid the date of Jesus' birth, because He did not want the church to celebrate it.

How then did Christmas make its entry into Christendom? The answer is: In the same way that infant baptism, priestcraft and a host of other human traditions have made their entry â€“ by the subtle working of Satan.

When the emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion of Rome in the 4th century, multitudes became Christian 'in name', without any change of heart. And they did not want to give up their tradition of celebrating the birthday of their sun-god on December 25th, when the sun which had gone down to the southern hemisphere began its return journey (the winter solstice).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica says this about the origin of Christmas: "December 25 was the Mithraic feast of the unconquered sun of Philocalus. Christmas customs are an evolution from times that long antedated the Christian period â€“ a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious and national practices, hedged about with legend and tradition. The exact date and year of Christ's birth have never been satisfactorily settled; but when the fathers of the church in A.D. 440 decided upon a date to celebrate the event, they wisely (???) chose the day of the winter solstice which was firmly fixed in the minds of the people and which was their most important festival. As Christianity spread among the people of pagan lands, many of the practices of the winter solstice were blended with those of Christianity".

God's Word Or Man's Tradition?

Behind the celebration of Christmas lies the far more deadly principle of following a heathen tradition as a Christian festival, even when it has no foundation in God's Word. So strong is this power of tradition that many believers who follow the Scriptures in other areas still find it difficult to give up celebrating Christmas.

It is amazing that many believers are not willing to accept what even secular writers (like the authors of Encyclopaedia Britannica) understood clearly – that Christmas is basically a pagan festival. You can call a donkey a lion, but it is still a donkey. Changing the name does not make a festival Christian! There is no difference between Christmas and any other non-Christian religious festival.

Jesus was engaged in a constant battle with the Pharisees over this very issue – man's traditions versus God's Word. He faced more opposition for opposing the empty traditions of 'the fathers' than for preaching against sin. We shall find our experience to be the same, if we are as faithful as He was.

God's Word alone is our guide and not the example of even godly men in those areas where they do not follow the Word of God. "Let God be found true even though every man be found a liar" (Rom.3:4).

For example: David was a man after God's own heart. Yet, for forty years, he permitted the Israelites to worship Moses' bronze serpent without realising that this was an abomination to God. He did not have light even on such obvious idolatry. It was a much lesser king, Hezekiah, who was given light to expose and destroy this idolatrous practice (2 Kings 18:1-4). So while we can follow godly men in the saintliness of their lives, we must not follow them in their lack of light on human traditions. Our safety lies in simply following the teaching of God's Word and in not adding to, or subtracting from it.

True spirituality is to follow Jesus in all aspects of life. This involves primarily a taking up of the cross and obeying God's word in the power of the Holy Spirit in daily life. It also involves a forsaking of all human traditions that are not found in the New Testament. God desires a pure testimony in every place - a church that is not only free from all sin, but also free from all Babylonian traditions.

However, since December 25th is usually a holiday for everyone and the days around it are also holidays for schools, many use this period for end-of-the-year family re-unions – which is a very good thing.

And further: Since some people attend church-services only once a year, on December 25th, it is good for churches to have services on that date, so that they can preach the gospel to such people and explain to them why Jesus came to earth: To save us from our sins.

But to celebrate December 25th as the birthday of Jesus would be a continuing of the pagan celebration of the birthday of the sun-god.

True believers are actually thankful every day of their lives that Jesus was born – and not just on one day in the year.

In conclusion: It is important to remember that we do not become spiritual merely by not celebrating Christmas. And those who celebrate Christmas are not necessarily carnal.

Spiritual people are those who follow Jesus along the way of daily self-denial and the daily infilling of the Holy Spirit – whether they celebrate Christmas or not.

So when we meet believers who celebrate Christmas, we must be gracious enough to consider that they may be ignorant of its pagan origin. So they are not sinning in any way when they celebrate it. On the other hand, we will be sinning, if we judge them.

–Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls. One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.– (Rom.14:4,5).

And that is the last word – and the best word – on this subject.

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Re: "CHRISTMAS – CHRISTIAN OR PAGAN?" by Zac Poonen - posted by proudpapa, on: 2016/12/13 14:36

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/12/13 16:26

Merry non-Christmas Zac.

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2016/12/13 17:12

These threads should just not be allowed, all they end up doing is causing strife. Makes you wonder why folks post these threads to begin with, they don't change anyone from celebrating Christmas they way they choose, what's the point?

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/12/13 18:38

Like I said in the other thread the only American Christians I know of that don't celebrate Christmas are on this forum.

It just seems awfully pretentious for someone to suggest that 95% of his brothers and sisters are a bunch of sinners for celebrating Christmas.

I guess the Jehovah's Witnesses are on the money.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2016/12/13 19:18

I believe there are 4 types of Christians,

1. People who celebrate Christmas believing that Dec 25th is the actual birthday of Jesus.
2. People who celebrate Christmas and judge others who do not.
3. People who do not celebrate Christmas as they consider it as a heathen tradition. They also judge others who celebrate Christmas as carnal.
4. People who do not celebrate and also do not judge who celebrate it.

This article addresses all the top 3 types of Christians. I think the worse of them all is type 3 as stated by this article. The best place to be is type 4.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2016/12/13 19:34

Quote:
-----So when we meet believers who celebrate Christmas, we must be gracious enough to consider that they may be ignorant of its pagan origin. So they are not sinning in any way when they celebrate it. On the other hand, we will be sinning, if we judge them.

–Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls. One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.– (Rom. 14:4,5).

As brother Sreeram has said well no matter our position we should not judge or use sarcasm or any type of belittlement to others in the body of Christ. This is absolutely a secondary issue and should not hinder fellowship with others in anyway.

I have slowly gone from a position of practicing Christmas to not celebrating any day in the entire year, including New Year's! And now I am starting to see the value in the Church calendar and from my little research to say all these things are pagan at times stretches the truth at times to make that fit.

Most believers (over 90%) celebrate christmas in some way. I would advocate these brethren to deeply use the time of year to ponder on the depth of the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Lord, allow these truths to change you, change the way you daily live.

I respect brother Zac Poonen greatly and at this point I do not fully agree 100% on this topic but that does not hinder me to receive full-heartily teachings from this brother on all other areas.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/12/13 20:01

Greg I appreciate your position.

Christmas is so ingrained in our society, and in Christianity, that it is not really practicable as a Christian to simply ignore it.

I certainly don't care if someone doesn't celebrate Christmas. I just don't personally know anyone who fits this description.

Re: - posted by dfella (), on: 2016/12/13 21:30

Rlcfchurch:

I am a white male in Michigan and am a member at Little Flock Christian Fellowship which is primarily an Indian Church and am familiar with RLCF as a brother at our church, Johnny Chandra's brother and mother attend your church.

Anyway, thanks for posting this teaching about Christmas on SI and agree we need a balance which Zac's teaching wisely and clearly points out. I want to ask for prayer for Little Flock as our Christmas outreach is this Saturday and we do it not to celebrate Christmas, but Jesus Christ, and to use this platform to preach the gospel to the unsaved as we all invite family, friends, neighbors, and co workers to come and hear about the fact they need to know Jesus personally.

So please pray specifically for this program and for a Indian couple which my brother in law works with the husband and their names are Raghu and Preema. They are Hindu but Tom has been sharing the gospel with Raghu for 16 years. Well a week or so ago Jesus appeared to Preema in a dream! and told her to come to Him. She woke Raghu and said he had to get up so they could pray together in the middle of the night. Raghu then came to work next morning and told Tom what happened. I told Tom to invite them to Christmas Outreach and they said they would be interested.

I am reminded of these scriptures:

1 Corinthians 9:18-23 KJV (18) What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. (19) For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. (20) And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; (21) To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. (22) To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (23) And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Philippians 1:14-18 KJV (14) And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (15) Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: (16) The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: (17) But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. (18) What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

December 25th is no different than any of the other 364 days in the year if you are free in Christ. Being salt and light should have no boundaries regardless of what people celebrate or not.

I personally do not celebrate Christmas its just like any other day to me but my wife does to a degree as well as our family and friends. I just take whatever opportunity the Lord provides to lift up the name of Jesus and trust me it works.

Re: "CHRISTMAS â€“ CHRISTIAN OR PAGAN?" by Zac Poonen - posted by joliboy11, on: 2016/12/13 23:44

For those who will take part of Christmas,

how should we do anyway?

celebrate it as birth of Christ?

what about, "Christmas parties", where there is lascivious dancing, singing of secular songs, and drinking beer in moderation. This is my struggle with my company who celebrate it that way even though an opening prayer is included..

how should I respond?

as for I now, I don't join if there are such activities, my conscience troubles me to call it Christmas party,

I know what mother's day and new year celebrates, I wonder how other defines Christmas if it is not the birth of Christ, what do they celebrate anyway?

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2016/12/14 8:45

It seems as though every year someone will bring this issue to this forum: the Bible does not teach us to celebrate the birth of Jesus, especially at Christmas time. And this is true. No where can one go to the scriptures that informs one to do so.

However, let us take a step back and see what it does say and NOT say.

Human nature is such that we love to celebrate happy events, like weddings, or any other exciting event - people love to gather together to feast in memorial of something that was special. Or, maybe we just love to get together to eat and fellowship and need a good reason to do so?!

The OT law does not specify that a wedding with feasting should accompany the union of a man and woman. Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding. This wedding/feast was not something commanded in their scriptures yet he legitimized it by his attendance and providing it with needed drink.

Consider the time when Esther saved her people from certain destruction. The people were so gratified they set aside a day of remembrance called Purim that was celebrated. Never does one read of any prophet that came along rebuking them for such celebrating.

As I see it we do well to not get slack in celebrating rituals the NT sets forth for Believers to observe and we do these with diligence and joy. These other events we love to celebrate serve well to enhance the human experience of togetherness - nothing wrong with that.

This is the way I understand it....

Taking a trip down memory lane, now....I recall as a child how fascinated I was with the traditional Nativity scene of a stable with Mary, Joseph and the baby in the manger. So fascinated was I that I loved to draw pictures of it. Even after 60+ years I can still vividly recall the emotion of awe with this scene. In some things a body never does quite grow up....and I do not apologize!

Sandra

Re: , on: 2016/12/14 9:09

Quote:

-----I believe there are 4 types of Christians.

5. People who joyfully celebrate Christmas and have lots of fun!!!

Seriously guys, don't we have something better to do than discuss these kinds of topics?

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2016/12/14 9:10

When Christians stop celebrating Christ at Christmas, what kind of message does this send to the lost? I guess the nay sayers could never imagine Christmas maybe bringing in some lost sheep, but then some Christians, don't know what the Lord really means when he say's "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD". Maybe we should have a thread on the goodness of Christmas, and how it's effected your life.

I can remember as a lost child, how every Christmas or Christmas season I personally thought more about the Lord, and especially when I was invited to someone's church and watched a Christmas play, and how I teared up just watching the play. Yes God used the Christmas season in my life to help me want to get to know this God more, it was part of his long process to bring me to his son Jesus Christ.

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2016/12/14 10:08

I do not believe that scripture condemns men having traditions. Scripture only condemns the traditions of man when they make the word of God of none effect (they negate, oppose, and void the word of God). I recall the argument among the elders of the early church about what advice should be given to the Gentile believers.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

What I notice is that we are saved by the grace of God and that I know that I am born again by the Spirit that bears witness in my own heart and that anoints me for ministry. I am not saved by celebrating or not celebrating Christmas.

Christmas as a tradition is a mishmash of all sorts of traditions, celebrations, etc. that are thrown into one big pot and sti

red beyond recognition. But the season does give me reason to celebrate the fact of the incarnation of my savior, and an opportunity to share this with others.

I am quite strongly of the belief that we must prayerfully consider God's will for our lives, seek His word and His will in all things, and be obedient. If I as His servant were to be convicted by the Holy Spirit that I were not to celebrate Christmas, I should neither judge another man's servant, nor would I wish to be judged. Neither will I judge one way or the other.

There really is a truth to the motto, In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/12/14 11:13

Sandra- loved your post. Thanks.

Re: , on: 2016/12/14 12:32

Dfella/David wrote:

"I just take whatever opportunity the Lord provides to lift up the name of Jesus and trust me it works."

Good word.

Re: ginnyrose - posted by JFW (), on: 2016/12/14 21:06

Sister Sandra,

I've missed your presence here recently but this post more than makes up for it!
It is a blessing to me and the sincerity and wisdom in it are priceless~

Merry Christmas dear sister:)

Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2016/12/15 0:05

I've enjoyed reading many of the comments here. I think that this has become something of a tradition each December.

Speaking of: I spoke with someone a few years ago who despised Christians who celebrate Christmas. I asked him, "When is your birthday?" He replied, "March 18th." I reminded him that "March" is named in honor of the Roman god of war ("Mars").

When it comes to Christmas, I am thankful that society is forced to consider the association with the holiday with Christ.

Yes, it has been greatly secularized over that last century. Yes, it has certain traditions that are undoubtedly pagan. Yet, the holiday is supposed to focus about the arrival of the King of Kings upon this earthly sod -- born in a stable rather than a palace -- and who would one day allow himself to be executed by the people of this world.

With that in mind, here is one of my favorite "Christmas" songs...

This Little Child
by SCOTT WESLEY BROWN

Verse 1

Who would have thought that long ago
So very far away
A little child would be born
And in a manger lay?

And who would have thought this little child
was born the King of Kings
The Son of just a carpenter

For whom the angels sing?

And who would have thought that as He grew
and with other children played
This child with whom they laughed and sang
Would die for them some day?

And who would have thought this little child
Would make a blind man see,
feed the hungry, make rich the poor
And set the sinner free?

Oh who would have thought this little child
Was who the prophets said
would take away the sins of man
And rise up from the dead?

Chorus

Oh I believe!
And I will always sing,
â€“This little child is the King!â€”

Oh, I believe!
And I will always sing,
â€“This little child...He is...
...the King of Kings!â€”

Verse 2

Many years have come and gone
Yet this world remains the same.
Empires have been built and fallen
Only time has made a change.

Nation against Nation.
Brother against brother
Men so filled with hatred
Killing one another!

And over half the world is starving
While a banner of decency is torn.
Debating over disarmament
Killing children before theyâ€™re born!

And fools who march to win the right
To justify their sin.
Oh every nation that has fallen
Has fallen from within!

Yet in the midst of this darkness
There is a hope, a light that burns.
This little child - the King of Kings
Some day will return!

Repeat Chorus

Verse 3

Who would have thought this little child
is who the prophets said
Will return to judge this world
The living and the dead?

Oh, can't you see that long ago,
So very far away,
This little child, our only hope,
was born a King that day!?

<http://tinyurl.com/thislittlechild>

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2016/12/15 9:46

Thank-you for your kind words, Fletcher.

I stayed away from the forum because I was afraid I was talking too much. I love the topics discussed here and it is very hard for me to not chime in when it is something I strongly believe in. And...being a mother, grandmother plus having acquired a substantial number of birthdays means my energy levels are slowing. I stay busy, occupied doing creative work with my sewing machines and helping my husband. And....caring for an aged parent who refuses to listen to common sense takes its toll on any mental energy you have.

One thing certain, SI beats FB by a long shot!

God bless and have a blessed Christmas now and forever more.

Sandra

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2016/12/15 14:15

Scott Wesley Brown...Wow, now there is a name I have not heard in about 25 years. Grew up listening to him on christian radio here in Joplin.

Re: Amen - posted by IAmMyBeloved, on: 2016/12/21 13:21

Sandra,

Stated very well!

My memories as a child, so long ago, were those of the Nativity Scene, a child born to save us for eternity.

We were, also, raised to celebrate the coming of Santa and all those trappings, but several years ago, I put them aside to celebrate only the birth of Jesus Christ.

I remember someone, a Jew, several years ago gave his testimony of how he became saved and part of that was the celebration others did of the birth of Jesus that drew his heart to that message and was convicted of his need of the Savior and forgiveness of sins.

How many today have their thoughts turned, even for a moment, to the truth of why we celebrate Christmas and thus have turned their hearts to the Lord?

Suicide rates are at the highest during these holidays. I'm sure they are searching before they make that horrific decision. May someone find the true message in our celebrations and accept that message into their hearts.