

What'S Wrong With Christmas?

Worship in Spirit and Truth

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Given 25-Dec-10; Sermon #1025

I would like to begin by reading an excerpt out of a recent article by a Protestant writer who tries to point out the main problem (in her opinion) of what is wrong with the way Christmas is kept. The irony of this article is that in her effort to defend Christmas she instead admits to its spiritual confusion and total lack of truth-based worship.

I do not want to embarrass or ridicule her in any way because she is sincere in her beliefs, so I will just keep her name and the title of the article confidential. She writes:

The main problem is not the way we trivialize shepherds and re-invent angels, nor is it the season of the year. I doubt that Jesus cares whether we celebrate His birth in December or closer to the unknown date. Nor is it the world's religious alternatives to Christianity. While Kwanza, Hanukkah, and Winter Solstice may have replaced Christmas programs in public schools and homes, they alone would not weaken the Church. Even socialism and Communism cannot quench faith. Their darkness only makes the light shine brighter and His promises more precious.

Just look at China and North Korea. Where believers face the deadly threats to their lives and churches, they demonstrate a growth in faith and perseverance (as well as in numbers) that puts American churches to shame. Nor is it the pagan roots of most popular Christmas customs. Few are even aware of the pagan history behind Christmas trees, mistletoes or the ancient midwinter celebration of a mother-goddess with the midwinter baby. While these unholy roots may contribute to spiritual confusion, the real crisis is more personal.

Our main problem has to do with our view of God and our relationship to Jesus. Many have been taught to think of the King of the universe as more like a super-Santa than a sovereign God who holds us accountable to His Word. We forget that life's trials as well as His gracious gifts are designed to conform us to His image, not meet all our wants.

But I ask, does Jesus care whether we celebrate His birth in December or closer to the unknown date sometime in the autumn? Should we celebrate His birth at all? Does it

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matter to God that most professing Christians do not care that Christmas has a pagan history, that its roots are pagan and unholy? Does God care that it causes spiritual confusion? Can we be conformed to His image while celebrating unholy celebrations like Christmas, Easter, and Halloween?

With so many falsehoods and deceptions surrounding and embedded in these holidays, we would be foolish to believe that God would approve of their celebration. John 8:32 records that Christ said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Does Christmas teach us the truth? Truth is very important to God. It is one of the names of Jesus Christ, and one of His requirements for membership in His Body.

John 18:37-38 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"

Only those who are truth seekers hear Christ's voice. So how can someone who promotes and celebrates lies hear what Christ has said in His inspired written Word?

Most people do not want to know the truth, because it interferes with what they want to do.

The apostle Paul had something to say about this to the Roman members of the church.

Romans 1:18-25 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and [divine nature], so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man [e.g. Santa Claus] and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God

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for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

The amazing thing about truth is it gives us a realistic view of everything in life: religion, politics, science, and history, which are all useless to us—even detrimental to us—if they do not advance the truth. Even so, people would rather hear a lie that initially pleases them, than the truth that ultimately exposes them.

Isaiah saw the way the human mind naturally works when he wrote that sin separates us from God. Sin causes people to not want to hear the truth for fear that it will expose their sins.

Isaiah 59:2, 4 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. . . . No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.

In contrast, Psalm 145:18 tells us that, “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.” So, we can rightly reason that the Lord God is far away from all who call upon (i.e., worship) Him in lies. How can we know how to properly worship God, if we believe the lie about *who* He is and *what* His purpose is?

God requires that we search for the truth in all things, so we will be capable of making wise decisions. Wisdom requires a foundation of truth. Wisdom is the right use of true knowledge.

Psalm 51:6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

This applies to all things in life. Even such things as buying a car or house, developing and building a friendship, choosing whom to marry, and how to raise children, cannot be done successfully without a basis of truth.

Pride, greed, and exchanges of lies are the main reasons for wars between nations. And even within each nation, the citizens give their support to their leaders to engage in war following propaganda based on “half-truths” and flat out lies to convince the people to support the cause.

You remember the apostle Paul's warning prophecy to the church in Thessalonica,

II Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

So we see from these scriptures that the natural mindset of mankind, especially at the end of the age, is to want to be told lies; and the reason that Paul gives for this is that they "had pleasure in unrighteousness."

What is "pleasure in unrighteousness?" If people have pleasure in sin, God punishes them. Punishment may come immediately, but sometimes sin's penalty comes much later. God has just ground on which to condemn the person who loves to do wrong.

The opposite of believing the truth is delighting in wickedness; a spiritual decision leads to its moral manifestation. This consequence catches up to everyone who disbelieves God's truth. Paul's primary concern is for unbelievers who will be living when the man of sin will be revealed. But these principles of God's judgment apply in all ages.

Origin and History

Many people are well aware of the tainted origin and history of Christmas. Even still, this holiday flourishes in this materialistic Western world, and its revelry is spread around the world.

There has been enough published on the Internet, in magazines, in newspapers, and shown in newscasts that people are not surprised to find out that it has a non-Christian background. It is easily seen in its syncretistic blend of pagan rites and Christian themes. Christmas is nothing more than a quagmire of deceptive traditions.

Because its origin and history is so well known, I do not want to spend a lot of time on that. I prefer to look at the spiritual principles that expose this holiday as an abomination. In Scripture, the term abomination is used symbolically of sin in general such as idols, ceremonies, and celebrations of the end-time world religions, as well as detestable actions.

One vivid example of this is found in Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:4-5 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The Lord God also hates lying and finds it abominable.

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.

Now, two of the things that God hates and are abominations to Him involve lying. Notice how these abominations were mixed into Christianity. It was not by any true member of God's church, but rather it was by the pagan world of Rome.

Syncretism destroys truth. A mixture of truths and falsehoods make the whole thing a lie. Notice how pagan worship was even given a Christian sounding name. Many historical sources show that Christmas was not observed by Christians from Christ's time to about AD 300. Saturnalia (December 17-24) and Brumalia (December 25) continued as a pagan celebration by the Romans well into the 4th century AD.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911 edition, in the article, "Natal Day," records that the early Catholic Church father, Origen, acknowledged, "In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his [Christ's] birthday. It is only sinners like Pharaoh and Herod who make great rejoicings over the day in which they were born into this world."

During the 4th century, the emperor Constantine seemingly converted to this world's Christianity and changed Sabbath keeping from the seventh day to the first day of the week. Sunday was the day he had worshipped the sun as his god. This made it easier for the Romans to call their pagan December 25th winter solstice festival, in which they had celebrated the birth of the sun god, the birthday of the "Son of God."

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The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, says, "According to the hypothesis accepted by most scholars today, the birth of Christ was assigned the date of the winter solstice (December 25 in the Julian calendar, January 6 in the Egyptian), because on this day, as the sun began its return to northern skies, the pagan devotees of Mithra celebrated the *dies natalis Solis Invicti* (birthday of the Invincible Sun). On Dec. 25, 274 [A.D.], Aurelian had proclaimed the sun-god principal patron of the empire and dedicated a temple to him in the Campus Martius. Christmas originated at a time when the cult of the sun was particularly strong at Rome."

It was not until the 5th century that the Roman Catholic Church ordered that the birth of Christ be observed on December 25, the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol, the sun god.

Thus, they renamed this day "Christmas."

There is much more wrong with the celebration of Christmas than its origin and history. A mixture of truths and falsehoods makes the whole thing a lie because it misrepresents its object. Therefore, a person cannot trust in lying words.

Trust in Lying Words?

Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.

Jeremiah wrote about not trusting in lying words. His message was to the people of Judah who claimed to be the people of God and who came to worship the Lord in the temple of the Lord. But although they came to worship the Lord God they mixed pagan rites and celebrations in with their worship. As we read this, apply it to our nations today.

Jeremiah 7:1-28 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!'" Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.' For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods

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to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'? And now, because you have done all these works," says the Lord, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer.

Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you. Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven [Mary worship]; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.' Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. So you shall say to them, 'This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.'"

They trusted in lying words that could not benefit them, words that were of no value and did not enhance and improve their relationship with God. Lying words cannot bring us closer to God. Lies are sins, and sin separates us from God. God does *not* accept worship that is a mixture of pagan and holy!

Today, it is not just governments that want to mix religious beliefs into one global religion, but most religious leaders are doing the same thing. Ministers of so-called Christian churches are stealing God's words for their own gain. The Lord God is against ministers who steal His words, saying that God says we should do this or that.

Jeremiah 23:30-32 "Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," says the Lord, "who steal My words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against

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the prophets," says the Lord, "who use their tongues and say, 'He says.' Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," says the Lord, "and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all," says the Lord.

False prophets and teachers quote each other's false interpretations of God's words and purposes. They teach their traditions rather than God's truth. Spiritual adultery is encouraged by ungodly spiritual leaders. Such false teachers lead people down slippery paths into spiritual darkness. People need spiritual leaders who are exemplary examples of faithfulness and commitment, not leaders who compromise by accepting and teaching lies.

Christmas turns people's hearts away from God. Think about what characterizes this pagan holiday. It is famous for its decadence, lying, greed, cavorting, drunkenness, gluttony, and murder. In this there can be no true worship of God and Jesus Christ, because they must be worshipped in spirit and truth.

Look at the comparison that the apostle Paul makes between the ways of the world and the ways of true Christians. The traditions and celebrations of the world are marked by the works of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These are the actions toward which sinful humans tend to gravitate. Our bad attitudes are from our innermost desire to please the self which produces the works of the flesh.

Now look at what marks God's holy days; they are full of the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let

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us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

The positive influence of God's Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit. These attitudes are manifested in our actions. The Holy Spirit empowers us to fight against sin—not merely in defense, but also in attack—by producing in Christians the positive attributes of godly character. In a positive sense, truth in thought manifests itself as truth in action.

Take for example the giving of gifts on Christmas. People claim that they give gifts on that day because Christ received gifts. But the truth is that the wise men brought gifts to the King of the Jews when He was a young child—not when He was born, or when He was an infant, but much later. The gifts were not given to honor His birth, but to show esteem to a King, as was the custom in the Middle East.

Further, the wise men did not exchange gifts with each other. So why do people today exchange gifts? Because the origins of these customs are based on gift giving and getting in ancient pagan worship!

It is interesting to note that offerings to churches decline at this time of year because people are spending their money on themselves and each other. How hypocritical!

You Shall Not Worship That Way

What difference does it make if we use such human traditions to honor Christ? Is Christ truly honored by customs that were once used to honor other gods? Can pagan customs be assimilated and become an accepted part of the worship of the One True God?

After Moses led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, the newly-freed Israelites demanded a golden calf to worship, presumably as they had seen in Egypt. So Aaron attempted to satisfy their human religious desires. Because they continued to believe the lies of the pagan Egyptian religion, even after witnessing the power of God in crossing the Red Sea, many remained bound in spiritual slavery.

Even though Aaron should have known better, he reasoned that a compromise would resolve the potentially dangerous situation. He mingled what seemed to be harmless religious customs, like those of other nations, with the worship of the God of Israel. And he took it upon himself to set aside a day as a feast to the Lord.

Exodus 32:5-7 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron

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made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. And the Lord said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves."

This compromise seemed to satisfy the people, but it was not God's way.

Exodus 32:21 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?"

Exodus 32:25 Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies).

So, Aaron gave in to the unrestrained people because of fear and lack of conviction on his part. And he established a new unauthorized feast day on which the Israelites ate, drank, and partied.

Later, the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land. The land was inhabited by various peoples who worshipped other gods. So God gave Israel a strict warning. He commands them to not look at other nations and to not inquire after their gods.

Deuteronomy 12:29-32 When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

Combining idolatrous practices with the worship of God was a recurring problem among the Israelites. They often willfully mixed pagan religious customs with their worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, similar to what mainstream Christians do today

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in their pagan religious celebrations of Christmas and Easter.

There are always people who wonder whether Old Testament scriptures apply to New Testament Christians. The apostle Paul answers this question.

I Corinthians 10:1-11 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Paul also said,

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

When it comes to matters of religion, Paul plainly instructed Christians *not* to mix together Christian and idolatrous practices. Here is the principle:

II Corinthians 6:14-16 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Notice the question in verse 15, “What accord has Christ with Belial?”

According to *Barnes' Notes*, “The word ‘Belial’ or ‘Beliar’ is found in some of the late editions. The form Beliar is Syriac. The Hebrew word Belial means literally without profit; worthlessness; wickedness. It is here evidently applied to Satan. The Syriac translates it ‘Satan.’”

The idea is that the persons to whom Paul referred—the pagan, wicked, unbelieving world—were governed by the principles of Satan, and were taken captive by him at his will, and that Christians should be separate from this wicked world, as Christ was separate from all the feelings, purposes, and plans of Satan.

Jesus, of course, was very clear about the way we should worship God.

Mark 7:6-7 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

Mark 7:9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."

Mark 7:13 "Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

The result of this practicing of lies is a worthless, repulsive worship. How absolutely un-Christian it is to celebrate the manmade and humanly-reasoned holiday of Christmas—a day mixed with pagan symbols—a day God did *not* ordain.

I John 2:21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. [And that no Christmas or Easter celebration is of God.]

Even beautiful music, singing, happy family dinners, treats and gifts for children do *not* justify celebrating a lie. “Silent night, holy night” (with its mother and child theme), “Santa Claus is coming to town.” It is *not* a holy night; and he is NOT coming down the

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chimney.

Start With God

Who has the right to decide how we worship God the Father and our Savior Jesus Christ?

God is not someone who accepts worship that is conceived through human reasoning. There must be truth in worship and that truth comes from God.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

What is the primary consideration in worshipping in spirit and truth? God is without fleshly body; He is not material or composed of parts; He is invisible, omnipotent, pure, and holy. This is one of the primary truths of worship, and the most awe-inspiring ever presented to the human mind.

Most nations have had some idea of God as a material being, but the Bible declares that He is a pure spirit. Because He is such a spirit, He does not dwell in temples made with human hands. He is not worshipped by human reasoning as though He needs anything, since He gives life, sustenance, and all things to every living creature.

Because God is spirit, the Israelites were not to make idols in the form of anything in creation as did the surrounding nations. For that reason, God should be the first consideration.

I John 1:5-8 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

There are two principles regarding the source for truth that I would like to point out here in verse 5. The first principle is that we must always start with God. The apostle John has already said in verse 4, "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full."

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And in verses 1-3, John explained that joy was being in fellowship with the Father and His Son.

Then John says in verse 5, "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." So the starting point must always be God Himself!

Now why do I emphasize such an obvious principle? Certainly the very first and basic thing for Christians is that we start with God. And yet it seems that half our troubles arise in our lives because often we do not start at this point. It is because human beings tend to assume that they know the truth about God. It is because they tend to assume that everything is all right in their ideas about God that many, if not most, of their problems occur because they constantly start *not* with God but with themselves.

Most people start with the self, and it affects the way they view and worship God. This is why pagan celebrations are acceptable to them in their worship of God, while it is *not* acceptable to God Himself.

Many people assume that they believe in God and that therefore they need not be concerned about examining their belief. Many people say, 'I've always believed in God, it's never occurred to me not to believe in Him.'

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

But believing that God exists profits us no more than the demons if that is all we believe.

So in all their thoughts about these things they tend not to start with God, and because they assume that, they tend to start with themselves. The Satan-influenced world puts humans at the center, and all thinking and all philosophizing has tended to start with them. Satan deceives them into placing themselves at the center of the universe.

In John 8 Jesus said,

John 8:44-47 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of

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sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

So, man thinks he has been placed on the throne, and everything—God included—has been put in terms of man according to human reasoning. Satan has convinced man to set himself up as an authority; it is always man in his need and condition that is his starting point.

That is his initial error and the source of most misunderstandings. The Bible is constantly reminding us that we must start with God. When anyone starts with man, he ultimately goes wrong in all his thinking about truth, because everything accommodates itself to a false doctrine of man.

The teaching of Scripture is that we can never truly know man unless we look at him from God's perspective. So we must always be careful not to start with ourselves. It is difficult for people not to do this; their whole approach to the truth naturally tends to be from that self-centered and selfish perspective which immediately perverts the truth. The world and many professing Christians approach their situation in this condition—they are in this world with its troubles and they are unhappy; they are looking for something they do not have. They are aware of their needs and desires; they are aware of a lack of happiness and contentment, and the tendency for most of them is to approach God and truth and everything else, in terms of their desires and their demands.

So they ask, "What can I get out of religion? What in religion will ease my problems and help me in this dark world?" And they immediately put together their own smorgasbord of religious beliefs. And those things, according to the apostle John in I John 1:5 and also the rest of the Bible, are the root source of error; it is the initial fallacy. So people must forget themselves, and submit to and obey God.

The principle that we have heard from the apostle John is, it is not that your needs and mine can suddenly be met by religion, but rather that, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Immediately we start with God and *not* with ourselves.

False religion is always popular and successful because it seems to give people what they want. People have their wants and needs, and false religion seems to offer them everything just as they want it, seemingly without initial pain or difficulty, and without any negative consequence.

Knowledge and understanding of God's truth starts with God. We are silenced, we are

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put into the background; we are not considering man first and foremost. It all starts with God, “In the beginning God. . .”—He is at the center of everything.

According to the Bible the initial cause of man’s problems is that, having been created in the likeness and image of God, instead of living a life in subservience to God, man suddenly exalted himself and claimed a kind of equality with God; and it is his own self-assertion that has led to all his problems.

So the point is that the starting point always must be God and not ourselves and our needs—*not* our desires and our happiness. Before the inspired written Word of God begins to address us about our specific needs, it has us see ourselves in the sight of God. Immediately in the Bible we are shown that we are created by God with everything else that is physical.

The Bible’s approach to the whole situation is quite unique and entirely different. It does not start by saying it can aid and help us, even though its effect helps us; it confronts us with God’s truth; it is the message from God that comes down to us. It does not come from human reasoning.

The second principle in I John 1:5 regarding the source for truth is that we must accept the revelation concerning God that we have from Scripture and from the testimony of Jesus Christ.

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” In other words, it is not enough to say that we must always start with God. The vital question is, “What is the truth concerning God? Who is God? What is God? What do we know about Him and His Son Jesus Christ?”

There are some people who lie to themselves saying they do not believe in God. But deep down everyone knows He exists—“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and divine nature, so that human beings are without excuse.” (Romans 1:19-20)

But the average worldly person who admits His existence says, ‘Yes, of course I do’, and then if you ask him what his ideas of God are, he says, ‘If God is a God of love, I can’t understand why He allows conditions to be so bad. Why does God allow wars? Why does God allow suffering?’

Notice that, immediately he is telling you what he thinks of God. That again, according

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to the Bible, is one of the first fallacies. To believe in God we must accept the revelation concerning Him, and that revelation is only found in His inspired written Word—the Old and New Testaments.

Remember that dogmatic assertion by the apostle John in I John 1:5, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

This, then, is the message that Christ’s apostles heard from God and proclaim to us. John does not say, “This is sort of the picture I have of God.” He does not say, “As the result of a lot of thought and meditation and reading, and as the result of my study of the Greek philosophies and contemporary thought, this is the idea I have come to concerning God.”

No, that is *not* what John says! He goes out of his way to say the exact opposite. John says, “What I am telling you is what my fellow apostles and I heard from God and heard about God.” John has already referred to Jesus Christ as, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard and seen and looked upon.”

John had to start with God because he says in effect, “I didn’t know God and my ideas concerning Him were false until I was taught by Jesus Christ who is in God the Father. I heard His words with my own ears. And the other disciples heard and saw as well.”

John 14:9-10 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."

There are only two ultimate positions. We either regard the Bible as authoritative, or else we trust to human ideas, to human philosophy. The whole case of the Bible is that this is the unique revelation of God.

Human reason can take us to a certain point, and it is acceptable to use it up to that point, but that will never bring us to a true knowledge of God. We can argue about many things in a purely philosophical manner. We can say that every effect has a cause, and that cause in its turn is just the effect of another cause, and that must be controlled by God.

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That may be correct as far as it goes, but to believe that is not to know God. There are many things people know *about* God; but that does not constitute knowing God in the sense that John means.

What John is telling us is that we can have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

The point is that we are left ultimately in this position of relying upon the revelation of the meaning of Scripture made possible by the Holy Spirit, and this revelation is the challenging effect of faith; faith calls upon us to come to this truth as little children, acknowledging our failure, acknowledging our incompetence. And, it confronts us by these revelations, and it inspires us to accept this truth.

We cannot know God ultimately apart from the revelation that He has been pleased to give us of Himself. We cannot know God ultimately in the sense of truly having fellowship with Him unless we are in Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jesus Christ is absolutely essential in that way. We cannot hold some view of God that makes us believe we can find God at a whim or that we can arrive at God by our own efforts.

No one comes to the Father except through Christ. He is essential, and we cannot truly know God unless we believe this revelation in Scripture concerning Him, not according to what man has devised in his own mind.

We believed certain things about God before we actually met Him. We had ideas concerning God before our calling and conversion, but when we met Him and listened to Him and knew Him—which is possible only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—it was only then that we really came to know God.

The human tendency is to say that we are all right in our belief of God. From that perspective it is our thoughts of God that are ultimately wrong before we receive revelation by and through the Spirit. It is in our approach to Him that we go astray. We must start with Him, and we are confined entirely to the revelation that has been given to us. He gave it to the patriarchs of old. He gave it in His law and statutes, and He gave it to the prophets whom He raised up one after another.

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God is emphatic in His revelation to David.

Psalm 119:142 “And Your law is truth.”

Psalm 119:160 “The entirety of Your word is truth.”

These were intended to give us knowledge and understanding of God, but it is only in His Son that we really come to know Him; it is only there that we can possibly know Him as Father and truly have fellowship with Him. And, we cannot have fellowship with Him through false pagan festivals and holidays.

Learned in Jesus Christ

The truth is in Jesus Christ! It is incompatible, even blasphemous to claim that Jesus Christ was ever part of Christmas. He is the epitome of truth. He was the Lord God of the Old Covenant, and He is the Lord and Savior of the New Covenant. The Psalms tells us that He is the Lord God of truth, and that all His work is done in truth, and that His truth preserves us, and that He will judge the people of the world with His truth when He returns.

The truth is in Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a vague, indefinite, nebulous kind of feeling or experience. It is something that can be defined and described. It is based on true knowledge. We are no longer in the world of sin; we are in the church of God because we have learned the truth about God the Father from His Son—we have learned Christ.

The essential trouble with non-Christians and professing Christians is that their minds are darkened and the truth is not in them. A true Christian is a person who primarily in the first place has received something in the realm of understanding. When God calls a person He first opens the person's mind to understanding and reveals the truth of His inspired written Word through Christ.

Ephesians 4:17-25 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. [This sounds like a

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description of those who blindly accept Christmas as a valid way to worship Christ.] But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, [i.e. receive revelation from God] and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

So the knowledge of Christ is the truth that is in Jesus. The saints of God have a faith that has existed throughout the entire history of mankind from its beginning; and thereby differs from the world's humanly invented religions.

All religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and the rest—are built upon human reasoning, teachings, rituals, traditions, and customs. They say that if you accept them and follow them and put them into practice you will be helped and your life will be changed. They promise change, but the result is a change into spiritual slavery.

But, that is not true of true Christianity at all!

The true religion of the saints of God announces certain facts and events that have taken place in history, and will take place in the future. It tells us that our salvation is based upon them; that in the fullness of the time God sent forth His Son, made flesh, to redeem people who are under the penalty of the law. He saves us. He is essential! So we are tied to the truth as it is in Jesus. All the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are in Him. All the truth is in Jesus, and there is no truth apart from Him.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Because everything is in Him, and He is the truth, if we are true Christians, Christ is in us; and if He is in us, the truth is in us and we must use it every day to direct our thoughts and actions. We must live by it and we must guard it.

Remember Paul's instruction to Timothy.

I Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. [Christmas and Easter turn people's hearts away from

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God.] By professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

Conclusion

Those who celebrate Christmas end up breaking many, if not all, of God's commandments. Christ's name is used in vain because He **never** put His name on Christmas.

Here are some of the lies of Christmas:

- Christmas is the birthday of the Messiah. (No it was not. He was born in the autumn.)
- December 25 is the birthday of Christ. (No it is not. It is the time when you can tell that the days are getting longer, thus, it is the old celebration of the birth of the sun.)
- Jesus was a baby in a manger, not a young child when the Magi came to give him birthday gifts. (The Magi came to pay respect to and to give gifts to a small child who was also a king.)
- Christmas is not about getting gifts, but giving. (Oh? People always ask, "What did you get for Christmas?")
- Shepherds in the holy land kept their flocks in the fields at night in the winter. (No they did not. It is too cold for them at night in the winter in the holy land).
- It does not matter if Christmas customs are from the pagan worship of false gods.
- God is like Santa Claus.
- Sun worship is a good way to honor Christ.
- The rising sun represents the resurrection of the Son of God.
- Christmas was kept by Christians from the time of the apostles. (No, it was not introduced into the professing church until the 4th century AD, and even then true Christians rejected its celebration.)

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- Christmas is a holy day. (God never commanded it, but He does condemn it.)

There are many more lies connected with Christmas. This is just a sampling.

Coveting material things seems to be the true "spirit" of this holiday. By receiving gifts, by drunkenness and gluttony, individuals are self-gratified, which inevitably leads to sin and crime. Police forces work rigorously to cope with the increased murders, suicides, robberies, and domestic disturbances. The whole accent of the Christmas season is on get, contrary to Jesus' statement recorded in Acts 20:35 that, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Again, the question most often asked at this time of year seems to be "What did you get?" not, "What did you give?"

It encourages getting and coveting, especially with children, more than any other day of the year, except maybe one's own birthday celebration. Christmas is a deceitful misdirection that entices people away from God's holy days. This revelry should in and of itself show that this holiday is in no way related to the Father and Son of Righteousness. Their holy days lead to peace, joy, hope, and spiritual growth. That is why God instructed the Israelites not to follow pagan customs or worship Him as the world does.

Remember, He says in Deuteronomy 12, "You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

Ungodly practices like these will not produce the purity of character God desires to see in each of us. James 3:11-12 explains that something pure cannot originate from what is impure. "Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh."

Why meddle with the paganisms in Christmas when we can enjoy the purity of God's real holy days revealed in His Word? In following God's instruction, we will grow in developing the true godly character that God expects in us. God commands His people to observe and keep His seven holy days listed in Leviticus 23.

There is always great rejoicing associated with God's annual feast days; and these are the only religious days that the patriarchs of old, God's prophets, and Jesus Christ and His apostles kept, the same which the church Christ founded has kept since.

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These joyous occasions teach and remind God's people how He is accomplishing His great master plan for mankind. It is through the knowledge of these days that we can understand what man is, the purpose of life, and the truth about the Kingdom of God. But, we must start with God in seeking truth.