

It is not wrong for families to get together and exchange gifts. The winter season is a time when people enjoy being with their loved ones. We are not opposed to this. We are not opposed to national holidays, such as July 4th and Thanksgiving. We are not opposed to families having a good dinner and many other things which might be called "folk customs" on December 25 (or any other day), but when a person tries to make such a day a "religious holiday" by claiming that Christ was born on that day, he errs. To observe December 25th as a civil holiday is as innocent as observing July 4th. But let's make sure we keep it that way without adding "religion" to it. Christ never authorized such. There will be no special services at the Church of Christ in observance of this pagan and Catholic holiday.

- By Ferrell Jenkins

Noteworthy

Prayer Requests: Jo Anderson (*ongoing medical*), Margaret Blackburn (*pancreas and hip*), Joe Brown (*cancer*), Marian Church (*neck & back*), Mildred Church (*shut in*), Jim & Mary Elliot (*recent passing of Jim's sister*), Linda James (*ongoing medical*), Sherman & Gus Johnson (*their sister's service will be Friday*), Paul Lloyd (*on-going medical*), Bonnie Meagher (*medical*), Ahrea and Neil Miller, Butch Morgan (*ongoing medical*), Dottie Reynolds (*back, ongoing medical*), Mike Sadler (*neck*), Suzette Stevens (*ongoing medical*), Arlene Turner (*medical*), Jerry Williams (*recovering from surgery on his hand*), Larry Wisdom (*recovering from knee surgery*).

Family and friends: Nell Goodall (*Charles Goodall's aunt, ongoing medical*), Chuck Goodall (*Charles & Ver-nita's son—cancer*), Ned Hicks (*Larry Hick's father - ongoing medical*), Brian James (*cancer*), Wayne Ryland (*ongoing medical*), Ardis Tucker (*Paula Sullivan's sister in law—ongoing medical*). Remember and encourage others who are struggling.

Group Meeting: Group 1 will meet *next week* after the evening worship service.

Kid's Review Class: Will meet *tonight* shortly after the evening worship service.

Assignments for Worship Service

Wednesday Night: 12/20/17

Song Leader: Clay Sadler
Opening Prayer: Trent Stevens
Invitation: Mike Sadler
Announcements: OPEN
Closing Prayer: David Williams
Recordings: Bob Marschall
Usher: Mike Sadler

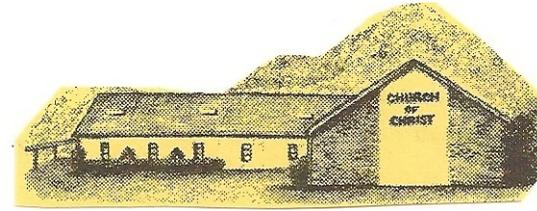
Sunday Evening: 12/24/17

Song Leader: Bob Marschall
Opening Prayer: Keith Marschall
Lord's Table: Sherman Johnson
Announcements: Leon Miller
Closing Prayer: Clay Sadler
Recordings: Trent Stevens
Usher: Gus Johnson

Sunday Morning: 12/24/17

Lord's Table: Sherman Johnson (B)
 Jordan Lawson (C)
Serving: Ed Lawson
 Timothy Payne
Song Leader: Keith Marschall

Opening Prayer: Jim Elliot
Announcements: Leon Miller
Closing Prayer: Jerry Williams
Recordings: Clay Sadler
Usher: Gus Johnson



**Lakeland Hills
Leader**

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ELDERS

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Leon Miller (863) 640-6378
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SERVICES

Sunday
Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
Morning Services 9:50 A.M.
Evening Services 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday
Bible Study 7:30 P.M.

DEACONS:

Robert Marschall
Michael Sadler
Moses Stevens
David Williams

EVANGELIST:

Ian Rice (863) 213-9795

"Christmas"

"Christmas time" is almost here. Lights are already up in town and signs indicating that December 25th is not far off are to be found almost everywhere. No doubt you have already bought a new doll for Sue and a bike for Johnny. It's the time of the year when people are singing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." Many denominations are making announcements of their "Christmas Programs." Since Christmas is practiced as a "religious" holiday it is necessary that we make an investigation concerning this festive occasion. In particular, two questions are in order: (1) Where did Christmas originate? and (2) Who authorized it? Since the term "Christmas" clearly indicates there is some connection with Christ we ought to be able to turn to the historical books written by inspiration that tell of the life of Christ and learn of this holiday. When we study Matthew and Luke, the only two gospels that record the birth of Jesus, we learn that no date (year, month, nor day) has been given for His birth. In order to determine the origin of Christmas we must turn to the appropriate place in the available encyclopedias and histories.

BIRTH YEAR

The Bible does not give the year of Christ's birth, and most people think that He was born at "zero" B.C., since B.C. means "before Christ." Actually, Christ was born somewhere between 7 and 4 B.C. Henry Halley gives a good explanation of this in the following paragraph: "When Christ was born time was reckoned in the Roman Empire from the founding of the city of Rome. When Christianity became the universal religion over what had been the Roman world, a monk name Dionysius Exigus, at the request of the Emperor Justinian, made a calendar in 526 A.D. reckoning time from the birth of Christ, to supercede the Roman calendar. Long after the "Christian" calendar had replaced the Roman calendar it was found that Dionysius had made a mistake in placing the birth of Christ in 753 A.U.C. (from the founding of Rome). It should have been in 749 or a year or two earlier. So the reason we say that Christ was born in 4 B.C. is merely because the maker of the "Christian" calendar made a mistake of 4 or 5 years in coordinating it with the Roman calendar which it replaced" (Pocket Bible Handbook, page 436).

BIRTH MONTH AND DAY

Albert Barnes, noted Presbyterian commentator, says with reference to the shepherds keeping their sheep in the fields: “The climate was mild, and, to keep their flocks from straying, they spent the night with them. It is also a fact that the Jews sent out their flocks into the mountainous and desert regions during the summer months, and took them up in the latter part of October or the first of November, when the cold weather commenced. While away in these deserts and mountainous regions, it was proper that there should be someone to attend them to keep them from straying, and from the ravages of wolves and other wild beasts. It is probable from this that our Saviour was born before the 25th of December or before what we call Christmas. At that time it is cold, and especially in the high and mountainous regions about Bethlehem. But the exact time of His birth is unknown; there is no way to ascertain it. (Emphasis mine, F.J.) By different learned men it has been fixed at each month in the year. Nor is it of consequence to know the time; if it were, God would have preserved the record of it. Matters of moment are clearly revealed; those which He regards as of no importance are concealed.”

Collier’s Encyclopedia concurs with Mr. Barnes when it says, “It is impossible to determine the exact date of the birth of Christ, either from the evidence of the gospels, or from any sound tradition.” The Catholic Encyclopedia tells us that “Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church.” Three commonly accepted dates for the birth of Jesus are January 6, March 25, and December 25. The majority of people celebrate Christmas on December 25. One might ask the question, “Why was December 25 chosen as the birthday of Christ?”

Why December 25? Liberius, Bishop of Rome (it should be remembered that the Catholics consider him as one of their early popes), in 354 A.D. ordered that December 25 be adopted. The choice of this date was probably influenced by the fact that this was the day on which the Romans celebrated the Mithraic feast of the Sun-god. The Roman Saturnalia also came at this time. “The indications are that the Church in this way grasped the opportunity to turn the people away from a purely pagan observance of the winter solstice to a day of adoration of Christ the Lord. Both St. Cyprian and St. John Chrysostom allude to this thought in their writings” (Collier’s Encyclopedia). The Lincoln Library of Essential Information states that “December 25 was already a festive day for the sun god Mithra and appealed to the Christians as an appropriate date to commemorate the birth of Jesus, the ‘Light of the world.’” From these statements from reliable sources it is easy to see that Christmas had its origin in a pre-Christian age among the pagans. It was adopted into the so-called “Christian holiday” by the Roman Catholic Church.

Christmas did not originate by the authority of God. None of the apostles ever celebrated the birthday of Christ. Even the name “Christ mas” is of Catholic origin. Encyclopedia Americana tells us, “The name is derived from the medieval Christes Masse, the Mass of Christ.” The Catholics had a special “mass” (their corruption of the Lord’s Supper) for Christ and so they called it “Christ Mass.” In time this was shortened to “Christmas.”

The Americana further states: “The celebration was not observed in the first centuries of the Christian Church, since the Christian usage in general was to celebrate the death of remarkable persons rather than the birth.” The Bible teaches us that the death of Christ is the important thing and not the birth. We are taught to observe the three following memorials: (1) Baptism, a form of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ ([Rom.6:3,4](#)), (2) The first day of the week, a memorial of Christ’s resurrection, and (3) The Lord’s Supper each first day of the week ([Acts 20:7](#)). This is a memorial of the death of Christ. Men have no right to set up other memorials for people to observe. It is a violation of the Law of God to do so. Sober thinking people who are striving to follow the teachings of Christ will not bow down to these Roman Catholic traditions.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Many are simply ignorant of the teaching of the Bible concerning the birth of Christ. It is a shame for parents to read fictitious stories to their children and call them “Bible Stories.” Parents, be sure the story is true to the Bible before you call it a “Bible Story.” Matthew and Luke tell of different events connected with Christ’s birth. The following chronology should prove helpful:

- The Birth of Jesus: [Matt.1:25](#); [Lk.2:1-7](#).
- The Visit of the Shepherds (same night): [Lk.2:8-20](#).
- Jesus’ circumcision (eight days old): [Lk.2:21](#).
- Jesus’ presentation (at least 40 days after His birth, read [Lev.12:2-6](#)): [Lk.2:22-38](#).
- The Visit of the Wise Men: [Matt.2:1-12](#).
- The Journey to Egypt: [Matt.2:13-15](#).
- Male Children Killed: [Matt.2:16-18](#).
- Return to Nazareth: [Lk.2:39](#); [Matt.2:19-23](#).

Read the Bible account in that order. Remember that the wise men and the shepherds were not the same. The shepherds visited the child Jesus the night of His birth, but the wise men traveled from the East (they did not travel by plane, but by plain) and did not arrive until, at least, after the presentation in the temple which was at least 40 days after the birth. The wise men found Jesus in a “house” (see [Matt.2:11](#)). The Bible does not say how many wise men there were! Three gifts do not indicate only three visitors. To conclude so is just as silly as saying there were only three guests at a party where a person received money, perfume, and cologne. There could have been two men or many.

CUSTOMS CONNECTED WITH CHRISTMAS

“Most of the customs now associated with Christmas were not originally Christmas customs but rather were pre-Christian customs taken up by the Christian church” (Americana). The Roman Saturnalia, already mentioned, provided many of the merry-making customs of Christmas. “From the pagan accent on light it is not difficult to trace the rise of lights and open fires — from the bonfires of sun worship and their variant, the yule log, to the many customs centering around the candle and its legends to light the Christ child” (Britannica). Santa Claus. Santa Claus is a contraction of Saint Nicholas. “St. Nicholas was a real bishop, who lived in the fourth century and became the patron saint of children. The children have adopted him as the ‘gift-bringer’ in some countries” (Book of Knowledge). There is some more Catholicism! Children in America sing songs in which they use both “Santa Claus” and “Saint Nicholas.” Could a Christian teach his child to sing to a Catholic “Saint?” Certainly not! (It is understood by this writer that some of these seasonal songs are good.) Space does not allow us to give a detailed discussion of these things, nor the origin of decorations, the use of mistletoe, holly, etc...

SHALL WE “KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS”?

It is impossible to keep Christ in “Christ Mass” for He was never in it. The Catholic Church dreamed that up all by themselves without the help of Christ, and I might add, without His approval. What about “X-mas”? At the time of this writing a sign in our town reads: “X means nothing ... Christ in Christmas means everything.” Many people seem to think it is irreverent to let “X” stand for Christ. I suppose it might be considered that way if one doesn’t know that the “X” is not an English “X”. The name Christ in Greek could be transliterated Christos. The English “Ch” is equivalent to the Greek “Chi” which is written in the Greek alphabet as an “X”. Actually, when a knowing person writes “X” to stand for Christ, he is simply abbreviating. It is no more irreverent to abbreviate “Christ” than it is unpatriotic to abbreviate “United States of America” with the usual U.S.A. (We might add that, for this same reason, using “X” as a substitute for “Christ” in “Christmas” doesn’t make it any more a scriptural designation – Ben Shropshire) *(Cont. on back...)* ▲