

Should We Observe Christmas as a Religious Holiday?

by Bryan Gibson

To help us in answering this question, let's begin by looking at a very important Biblical principle. This principle is found in Matthew 21:23-27. The chief priests and elders confronted Jesus and asked Him, "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" In response to their question, Jesus asked them a very revealing question, "The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men?" What this question shows is that every religious teaching or practice must come from one of two sources: heaven or men. But what if it should come from men? Is there any problem with that? YES, according to Jesus in **Matthew 15:9**: "And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men." It is indeed a serious thing to teach or practice anything which has its origin with man (see also **Colossians 2:22**; **Titus 1:14**). Now, what about the practice of observing Christmas as a religious holiday, that is, celebrating it as the birth of Jesus? Is this practice from heaven or from men?

If this practice comes from God, we should expect something to be said about it in the Bible. But when we look carefully throughout the Bible, frankly, we cannot find a word about Christmas. Nowhere is there a command to celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25. We have no examples of it being done. In fact, the Bible says nothing about exactly when Jesus was born. With nothing in God's word about this practice, we must conclude that it comes from man. That being the case, we simply cannot turn his birth into a religious observance.

It seems ironic, in looking at the celebration of Christmas, that the birth of Christ receives almost more attention than the death of Christ. The birth of Christ was a wonderful event, but the focus of the gospel message is the death of Christ (**1 Corinthians 2:2**; **15:3-4**). In fact, the death of Christ is something God *does* teach us to observe. We do this every first day of the week when we eat the Lord's Supper (see **Matthew 26:26-28**; **Acts 2:42**; **Acts 20:7**; **1 Corinthians 10:16-21**; **11:17-34**). This practice clearly comes from heaven, or from God. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same about the observance of Christmas as the birth of Christ.