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**You teach that Christians should not keep man's holidays, such as Christmas, but rather, they need to observe God's annual Holy Days. Why can't we do both? And what, exactly, are those annual Holy Days, and how are they different from days such as Christmas?**

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We are indeed close to the time of the year when people get all excited in anticipation of the Christmas season, complete with the hustle and bustle of shopping and, far too often, excesses both in over-spending, over-eating and over-drinking.

Far too many never seem to stop and think about the consequences of these excesses. Are people considering the fact that what is charged and overspent has to be paid back and sometimes at high interest rates, and that for a long time; also, that there are long range effects of excesses in eating and drinking to one's health; and finally, that there are terrible consequences for family relationships; especially, when arguments break out, leading to violence to the degree that someone loses his or her life?

Why is it that many don't seem to ask: Is this really what God wants us to do? And apart from the excesses, where do the Christmas customs come from in the first place, and are they biblically based?

The attitude seems to be: Don't confuse me with the facts. But the facts are that in spite of the saying, "Let's put Christ back into Christmas," Christ was never in Christmas to begin with.

For instance, there is no biblical emphasis on the day He was born. The Bible nowhere tells us WHEN He was born, except that it makes it abundantly clear that He was NOT born anywhere near December 25. The biblical emphasis is more on the fact of His death and resurrection--showing

the importance of the teaching that by His shed blood and His resurrection, man can also obtain forgiveness of sin and eternal life. And the Bible does tell us when Christ died and when He was resurrected--but this did not occur on "Good Friday" or "Easter Sunday"--both of which are additional human inventions based on paganism.

The whole Christmas manger scene is a complete fraud. There were no wise men at the manger. The number of the wise men is not specified. It is only stated that they gave three types of gifts, but they didn't see Christ until He was a young child. At that time, He was no longer in a manger, but lived in a house (Matthew 2:11). According to Matthew 2:16, Christ was at that time perhaps as old as two years, since King Herod had all children two and under killed, based on the information which he had received from the wise men.

It was the shepherds watching over their flocks by night who visited Joseph, Mary and the Baby when He was born. An historical study of the area would determine that they never had flocks out in the fields after late October, so the date of Christ's birth could not have occurred after the end of October. There is no biblical injunction to celebrate one's birthday and, as mentioned, there is certainly no emphasis placed on the date of Christ's birth.

The Bible tells us that we must not keep man's religious holidays, which are steeped in paganism (compare Deuteronomy 12:29-32). A perusal of any encyclopedia or reliable historical source into the origins of the Christmas holiday would bring one to the conclusion that it and its customs are totally pagan in origin. In fact, ALL the Christmas customs, as well as the festival itself, are derived from the worship of pagan deities and sun gods. For full proof, please read our free booklet, "Don't Keep Christmas."

What the Scriptures clearly tell us and what mankind for the most part rejects, is the command to observe the seven annual Holy Days of GOD, outlined in Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16. Seven is oftentimes representative of the number of completion (compare, for example, the 7-day week

created by God, as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2). The seven annual Holy Days picture God's plan for mankind from beginning to end. They are holy because God placed His presence in them. They totally encompass what God has in mind for mankind as to man's potential and reason for being on this earth.

God's annual Holy Days are introduced with the Passover, which is a memorial of Christ's death. It was on the day of Passover, in 31 A.D., that Jesus Christ died. Contrary to popular belief, that day was a WEDNESDAY--NOT a Friday. The Passover is a festival but not an annual Holy Day per se.

The first and last Days of Unleavened Bread are the first two annual Holy Days. They picture putting sin out of our lives and also point at the resurrection of Jesus Christ--which occurred on SATURDAY at sunset, and NOT on Sunday morning--exactly three days and three nights after His BURIAL--during the Days of Unleavened Bread. It is only through Christ living in us that we can overcome sin. Seven denotes completion, so the SEVEN Days of Unleavened Bread picture removing sin completely. We put the physical leaven out of our homes, and refrain from eating leavened products during that time, as a symbol of putting sin out of our lives.

The next annual Holy Day is Pentecost, which pictures, historically, the Church receiving the Holy Spirit. When we repent of our sins, believe in and accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, are baptized and have hands laid on us by a true minister of Jesus Christ, we, too, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit--as a down payment or guarantee of eternal life (see 2 Corinthians 5:5). With the help of God's Spirit in us, we can and must grow in the fruit of the Spirit, as well as in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, by using the tools God provides for us, including prayer, Bible study, meditation and occasional fasting.

Pentecost is followed by the annual Holy Day of the Feast of Trumpets. It pictures the glorious return of Jesus Christ to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth. At the same time, true Christians who are still alive, and those who died in

Christ and who are then resurrected, will be given eternal life in the Family of God.

The Day of Atonement is the fifth annual Holy Day, which pictures the removal of Satan. Christ will place all of man's sins, for which Satan is responsible, on his head and will banish him for 1,000 years. During that time, he will be unable to deceive mankind.

Following Atonement is the annual Festival of the Feast of Tabernacles. This is a seven day event. The first day of the seven-day Festival is an annual Holy Day. The Festival pictures the millennial rule of Christ and His saints on this earth and over this earth. The Kingdom or Family of God will rule mankind to help them also reach their potential--eternal life in the Kingdom of God as the very members of the God Family.

The final and seventh annual Holy Day is the "Eighth Day" or the "Last Great Day," which pictures a time after the Millennium, when those will be resurrected who have lived and died without ever having been given an opportunity to know and accept Christ as their personal Savior. Then, they will have their opportunity to either accept or reject Christ and the government of God over them. Those who reject God the Father and Jesus Christ will be thrown into the lake of fire to be devoured and burned up--their existence will cease. The Bible does not teach a never-ending torture in an ever-burning hell fire; rather, their final punishment will be swift and decisive.

After all these events, God the Father will come to earth and dwell with His Family of immortal Spirit-born Sons and Daughters. The God Family will rule for all eternity, and there will be no more pain, sorrow or death (see Revelation 21:4)

This future for man, which is revealed through God's annual Holy Days, is much more fulfilling than the false commercialized Christmas or Easter concepts pushed upon an unsuspecting and deceived world. In fact, Christmas and Easter celebrations portray an altogether false image of Jesus Christ. They either picture Him as a little baby in a manger, or as a dead man on the cross.

But Christ is ALIVE--He is our LIVING High Priest--the second glorified and all-powerful member of the immortal GOD Family. He is LIVING in true Christians to help them become born-again immortal members in the God Family as well.

Why would we want to neglect keeping God's meaningful Holy Days, by substituting them with a cheap and unsatisfying alternative? And why would we try to engage in syncretism--mixing paganism with Christianity--in an attempt to keep all of them? God tells us not to do this! (For more information, please read our free booklet, "Is That in the Bible?--Man's Holidays or God's Holy Days.")

The choice seems clear. It is the choice between sin and righteousness; between life and death. God wants us to choose life and live--we as well as our descendants. Let us ensure that we DO choose life.

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