

Christmas as a *religious* holiday in the New Testament Church. It is *our opinion* however that there *is* a solid Scriptural argument that leaves the *rest* of that decision up to the conscience of individuals — *as long as* their conscience has been trained with the Word of God, leading therefore to a valid conclusion *based on* that Word. We went into some depth concerning *that* discussion in the December 1st, 2008 issue of *Diligence* as well. We won't repeat it here but encourage you to read that issue if you have questions concerning this discussion.

Just a couple more random thoughts concerning this whole question about Christmas. First, we might take note of the fact that there are *numerous* special days celebrated on our *secular* calendar — days such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving Day, etc. Those days are of course *also* not mentioned in the Scriptures. That however doesn't mean that we will never have a sermon or sing a hymn that might have particular relevance to a certain *secular* day being observed by our Nation. There's just no Scriptural authority to celebrate those days as *special events* in the worship practices of the Church.

Secondly — in reference to this *Nation's* celebration of Christmas. We might want to take into consideration the *tremendous* efforts being made to completely *eradicate* any recognition of God and Christ from this country. More and more businesses as well as schools are adjusting their schedules to accommodate the Muslim faith while denying holidays common to Christianity. Public school systems are no longer allowed to refer to "Christmas Break" — it *must* now be referred to as "Winter Break" (or some other generic term). Many store clerks are no longer allowed to say "Merry Christmas" — they must say "Happy Holidays." So since the Scriptures don't authorize celebrating Christmas as a *religious* event in the New Testament Church, might Christians celebrate that day as a *secular* holiday, since it *is* the one day each year that this Nation as a whole sets aside to pause and give at least *some* thought — shallow as it may be — to the birth of a Savior, who is Christ the Lord? Would it be wise for us to take advantage of that opportunity?

The question that *should* be asked *whenever* one reflects on Jesus' birth is this: "Christ came to earth to be my Lord and Savior, to save me from sin and reign as King in my heart. Have I fulfilled the significance of His birth by responding to the significance of His death and resurrection?"



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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.*



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DILIGENCE

*"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end,
in order to make your hope sure." — Hebrews 6:11*

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The Birth Of A Savior

Well, here we are again — that time of the year when this Nation as well as much of the world celebrates what has been designated as "the day baby Jesus was born." (More on that later). It's *also* the day that denominations celebrate the Christmas season with all kinds of special services, cantatas, plays, and the solemn occasion of "midnight mass" in the Roman Catholic church. Let's face it — Christmas is a big deal to a *lot* of people. Many of those who profess no *religious* affiliation at *all* still *celebrate* Christmas.

In Volume 7, Issue 21 of *Diligence* (December 1st, 2008), we engaged in a rather detailed discussion of whether or not members of the New Testament Church should celebrate Christmas. You can read that issue if you wish by going to the web site listed in *this* issue at the bottom of page 4 and locating that particular date range on the menu provided. (If you do not have access to a computer and would like to read that issue, we'd be happy to send you one by regular mail — just give us a call. Our phone number is also at the bottom of page 4). In short, there's just no Scriptural authority allowing for the celebration of Christmas *as a religious event*. That earlier article however pointed out that perhaps New Testament Christians could *use* the overall general "feeling" of that time of the year to their advantage by taking the opportunity to *encourage* an acknowledgement of God in the land.

That article *also* referenced the *many* efforts afoot nowadays to totally erase the fact that much of the world *does* celebrate a holiday called "Christmas" and that holiday exists *because of* the birth of Jesus Christ. This means that it is quite possibly the *only* time of the year when *some* people give *any thought* whatsoever to Jesus. Granted — their focus is *only* on His birth and they most likely never move past visualizing the Savior of the world as a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

When Christians ponder the season of Christmas, it's wise to remember a few things. First of all, there is no mention whatsoever in the Bible of any of the congregations of the New Testament Church celebrating an annual observance commemorating Jesus' birth. In fact, that practice didn't even begin until somewhere around the 19th century. So — *if* — we wish to duplicate as closely as possible, (which we surely *should*) the practices and activities of the church that was established on the day of Pentecost in Acts, chapter 2 — we wouldn't want

to make a “big deal” out of Christmas *in* the New Testament Church because there’s no authority in the Scriptures to do so. The apostles didn’t teach that we should do so nor did they give an *example* to us that would indicate that we are to do so. That’s why the New Testament Church doesn’t celebrate “Christmas” as a *religious* event or holiday. That’s why we don’t decorate our buildings with lighted trees, wreaths and beautiful flowers or plan a variety of special events surrounding the day “designated” as “Christmas Day.” That’s why we don’t schedule special “Christmas Eve” or “Christmas Day” services. It’s just not an event the Scriptures authorize — much less command us to do in the New Testament Church.

Many of those who are new babes in Christ struggle with this since they have come from a background that holds December 25th in high regard as a *very holy* day — but the Bible says no such thing. In fact, it’s *unlikely* that the actual month of Jesus’ birth was even *in* December. (That subject is *also* discussed in the 2008 *Diligence* issue we mentioned earlier). The fact that we have no Scriptural authority for a *special* celebration of Christ’s birth and have no Scriptural authority to set aside a particular day to commemorate that event as part of the New Testament Church, does not in any way demean the importance of the birth of the Savior of the world. It was obviously an extremely important event in the history of mankind. The prophets had, for hundreds of years foretold of His birth. The birth of a Messiah had been promised since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Angels proclaimed His birth at the time it happened. His birth meant that God would live among men and establish a Kingdom that would last forevermore. Christ’s birth meant that man would have a way to be saved from sin. It meant that both Jews *and* Gentiles would be offered salvation. So the significance of that event is obviously monumental. There’s just nothing in the Scriptures that tell us to celebrate that monumental event as a religious holiday or to schedule special worship services in the New Testament Church in conjunction with that particular event.

We *are* however instructed in the Scriptures to *regularly* have a special event to commemorate His suffering and death on the cross — that special event is the Lord’s Supper. And we are instructed to do *that every* first day of the week.

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” (I Cor. 11:23-26 NASB)

So why *would* we not be instructed to celebrate His *birth* with *some sort* of special recognition in the Church? It was definitely a significant event in mankind’s history.

There may be *several* possible reasons. First of all, there’s that little problem of not knowing *when* Jesus was born. Was it in December? Or might it have been in September, or January, or May, or ??????. We just don’t know exactly — the inspired writers of Scripture were not instructed to tell us. We can put together a few *clues* from the Scriptures that *might help* us to have some *general* idea — but we *sure* can’t come up with a *definite* month and day of the year.

Then there’s another little problem with the fact that thousands — even *millions* of *births* happen *every* year — not to mention the ba-zillions that have happened since the beginning of *time*. So — does the mere *birth* of one more baby really stand out? Probably not — *especially* if you were a Gentile in those days who was not looking for a promised Messiah.

All of the things that resulted from Jesus’ birth — such as the establishment of the Church, a way of salvation for all mankind, the fulfillment of prophecy, etc. — would *not* have been possible *had it not been* for the death, burial, and resurrection of that baby that had been *born* along with millions of *other* babies — perhaps even on the same day. While it *is* a fact that *none* of the *other* babies were born to a *virgin*, can you imagine how *few* people would have *believed* that had it not been for the death, burial and resurrection of that one particular baby?

Maybe then, in the Church that Jesus established, there are a *number* of reasons why the Scriptures give *no* instructions to commemorate His *birth* while they *do* give a *direct command* to commemorate His suffering and death on a *weekly* (not *yearly*) basis.

As we mentioned a bit earlier — those who have grown up with the tradition that Christmas is a “*holy*” season and are accustomed to attending elaborate “church services” on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day in a church that has been decorated with lighted trees, poinsettias, wreaths, etc. — find it - uh - uh - maybe we could say — unsettling(?) — to *not* do those kinds of things on what they have been taught is one of the holiest days of the year set aside to honor the birth of our Savior. Some even verbally express that “it just doesn’t feel right to not go to church on Christmas”. They feel as if they are ignoring Jesus Christ as their Savior if they don’t do *something* special on December 25th to worship Him in some way! That “feeling” shouldn’t be too difficult to overcome when they realize that December 25th was a day *chosen* by man and has no *Biblical significance* attached to it. The *most significant event* of Christ’s life is celebrated *every* Lord’s day in the New Testament Church.

Now — *that* brings up another subject. Is it wrong then to celebrate Christmas at all? Is it wrong to have a Christmas tree in our homes, decorate extensively, have Christmas parties and exchange gifts with friends and family? There are strong opinions on both sides of that question, and both sides have what they consider to be reasonable arguments. It *is* clear that there is no Scriptural authority to celebrate