



Welcome, **mbwilley**
[Sign Out, My Account]

[Groups Home](#) - [Blog](#) - [Help](#)

Free 500GB Portable Hard Drive
Just Complete 1 Offer & Get a Free Western Digital 500GB my book HD.
> www.ExternalDriveOffer.com

Pharmaceutical Consulting
Customized research projects to improve your business.
> www.CuttingEdgeInfo.com

X Box
Browse a huge selection now. Find exactly what you want today.
> www.ebay.com

mbwilley · mbwilley@yahoo.com | Group Owner - [Edit Membership](#)

[Start a Group](#) | [My Groups](#)

thegoodtidings · The Good Tidings

Search for other groups... Search

- [Home](#)
- [Messages](#)
- [Pending](#)
- [Spam?](#) [\[Delete\]](#)
- [Post](#)
- [Files](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Pending](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Database](#)
- [Polls](#)
- [Members](#)
- [Pending](#)
- [Calendar](#)

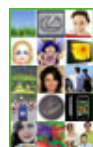
[Promote](#)
[Invite](#)

[Management](#)

Yahoo! Groups Tips

Did you know...
It's your group. Make it marvelous. [Check out Moderator Central.](#)

Best of Y! Groups



Check them out and nominate your group.

Messages

[Messages](#)

Message # Search: [Advanced](#) [Star](#)

The Good Tidings, Dec. 2007

[Messages](#)

[Reply](#) | [Forward](#) | [Delete](#)

Message #7 of 8 < [Prev](#) |

Thu Dec 13, 2007 12:

[Show Message Options](#)

The Good Tidings

"...I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God..." (Luke 4:43)

www.thegoodtidings.has.it

December 12, 2007

Michael Willey
<mbwilley@yahoo.com>
[mbwilley](#)
 Offline
[Send Email](#)

[Remove Author](#) | [Ban](#)

The holiday season is upon us. For many, it may be the one time of the year that their thoughts dwell on God. But it is also a season filled with religious error regarding the birth of Christ. New Testament Christians must be ready for every opportunity to speak to others about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but, we must be careful about avoiding the religious error that is so prevalent. For these reasons, I have included the following two articles in this issue of *The Good Tidings*.

Let me also take this opportunity to wish you a very happy and safe holiday season.

Michael Willey, Editor

CHRISTMAS

Darren E. Mays and Michael B. Willey

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:1-7).

Many religious people would state unequivocally that the event described by Luke took place on December 25th, over two thousand years ago. Was Christ born on what is now called Christmas Day? Is there Scriptural authority for celebrating Christ's birthday? If not, how did Christmas originate? Can Christians celebrate Christmas? In short, what is the truth about Christmas?

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (Luke 2:8). This simple statement from the Gospel of Luke is sufficient to defeat the argument that Christ was born on December 25th. It was a common practice of shepherds at that time to take their flocks out into the fields during warm weather and to stay with the flock overnight to guard against predators. In December, however, it is too cold for this practice. Therefore, Jesus was born some time before December 25th. The noted commentator, Albert Barnes, concurs in this statement.

"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 some one to attend them, to keep them from straying, and from the ravages of wolves and other wild beasts. It is clear 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" (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament (In One Volume)*), Kregel Publications, 1962, pg. 189).

Since the flocks were taken up in late

October or early November, there would have been no shepherds in the field to hear the message of the angel of God (Luke 2:9-14) had Jesus been born on December 25th.

Evidence of the harsh nature of the weather in the Middle East in December can be found in recent history. On December 17, 1992, the Israeli government banished 417 Palestinians to southern Lebanon (*Time*, January 11, 1993, pgs. 10 and 22). These refugees lived in tents, and had very little clothing. There was great concern expressed by the United Nations and other agencies about the safety and health of these men living in conditions which offered such little protection from the elements. The news reports at the time were filled with pictures of men huddling around campfires and tents covered with snow. There would have been similar weather conditions in Bethlehem in December in the year of our Savior's birth. Clearly, Jesus was not born in December.

Is the date of the birth of Christ important? To quote Barnes (pg. 189), "God has concealed the time of his birth. There is no way to ascertain it. By learned men it has been fixed at each month in the year. Nor was it of consequence to know the time; if it had been, God would have preserved the record of it. *Matters of moment are clearly revealed. Those which God regards as of no*

importance are concealed” (italics added, Authors).

While the date of the birth of Jesus is of no significance, the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin is significant, for the birth of Jesus in this manner fulfilled the prophecy contained in Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” The manner of the birth of Jesus confirms that he is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matt. 16:16). The Bible, however, does not command Christians to commemorate the birth of the Savior. Indeed, the birth of Christ is recorded in only two of the four Gospel accounts. Rather, Christians are to commemorate the death of Christ (1 Cor. 11: 23-26). Religious holy days and festivals were a part of the law of Moses which was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). The celebration of the birth of Christ originates not in a commandment of God, but in pagan festivals.

Early Christians were familiar with various pagan celebrations that occurred near the time of the year now known as Christmas. The festival of Saturn, the Roman god of agriculture, for example, took place December 17th-24th. However, “there is no evidence that the early church celebrated the birth of Christ. In fact, early traditions differ

about the time of year in which Jesus was born. Some suggest April; others early January. Observance of December 25th became common by the A.D. 330's, when this date was chosen to replace a Roman celebration commemorating the sun's climb following the winter solstice" (*The Revell Bible Dictionary*, Fleming H. Revell Co., New Jersey, 1990, pg. 209). Other sources also attribute the selection of December 25th as the birthday of Christ to the pagan worship of the sun. In his book, *The Mysteries of Mithra* (Dover Publications, Inc., New York, NY, 1956), historian Franz Cumont stated that there was a wide spread custom requiring that "...the new birth of the Sun..., which began to wax great again on the termination of the winter solstice, should be celebrated by sacred festivals" on December 25th (page 167). Cumont stated further that "...it appears certain that the commemoration of the Nativity was set for the 25th of December, because it was at the winter solstice that the rebirth of the invincible god...was celebrated" (page 197). *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, Vol. 13, page 408) states that "...in 274 the emperor Aurelian began a vigorous campaign of propaganda celebrating the sun god as the exclusive protector of Rome's imperial might," and that this cult of Sol Invictus (the "invincible sun") "...became a major and, at times, dominant force in Roman religion."

The article also states that "...the traditional date of Christmas...is hardly unrelated to the fact that 25 December was celebrated as the birthday of Sol Invictus...". How easy it would have been for the leaders of the church, already in apostasy, to establish a festival celebrating the birth of the Son of God on the day when the birth of the sun god had normally been celebrated. This Christ's Mass, established without Scriptural authority, became the Christmas that we know today.

Having demonstrated that December 25th could not have been the birth date of Christ, and further, that the choice of that date was due to pagan customs, we now turn our attention to another important question. Can Christians celebrate Christmas? The answer is a conditional yes.

We as Christians must first understand that Christmas has a religious and non-religious significance in today's world. The Christian chooses to enjoy the non-religious holiday which is little different than Memorial Day or Labor Day or any other secular holiday with traditional and cultural significance. We must be careful not to practice or lead others to believe that we are celebrating a religious holiday which has not been sanctioned by the authority of Christ. Christians may enjoy Christmas as a time to be off from work or school, a time to give and receive gifts, a

time to relax and reflect on the past year and the upcoming new year, a time of traditional folklore, such as Santa Claus and the decoration of a Christmas tree, and a time for singing non-religious traditional songs. Christians should avoid the “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11) that accompany the celebration of Christmas as a religious holy day, such as commemorating December 25th as Christ's birthday, displaying nativity scenes, attending special Christmas services, and singing and listening to Christmas carols which are spiritual in content and nature.

Christians are commanded to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:25). However, if we choose to create our own methods of worship or special days of worship, we place ourselves in the position of having the authority to determine what God desires as worship. This false worship is vain and worthless (Matt. 15:9, Mark 7:7). Further, if we make additions to or subtractions from that which is given us in the New Testament, we will incur the punishment of God (Rev. 22:18-19). Christmas is a joyous secular holiday, but is not, and should not be celebrated as, a religious holy day.

HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN VIEW CHRISTMAS?

Allen Webster

The American "Christmas Season" is filled with many enjoyable and worthwhile customs. It is a happy time of year. The attitudes that are especially noticeable—love, good will, peace, joy, giving—are what God intended for men to exhibit year round. The exchanging of gifts, laughter, and love rekindles our spirits and strengthens our families. Everybody but Scrooge loves Christmas.

We often hear that "Jesus is the reason for the season" and "let's put Christ back in Christmas." Christians ask, "How should I celebrate Christmas?" or "Should I celebrate it at all?" Since we should be "...ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh" (I Peter 3:15), this topic deserves consideration. What does the Bible say about Christmas?

CHRISTIANS MAY ENJOY THIS SEASON AS A NATIONAL HOLIDAY.
Christians do not have to cease to be happy in Jesus at "Christmas" just to be different than others. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4). He also wrote, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice" (Rom. 12:15). This would include Christmas as much as any other day. There is not enough happiness in the world anyway. We may give and receive gifts as easily on this day as any other. This is a good time to teach our children that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Christians observe many non-religious holidays (e.g., July 4; Labor Day, Memorial Day, Valentine's Day), and can celebrate "Christmas" in this sense (unless it violates the conscience, Rom. 14:23). This falls into the area of Christian liberty (Rom. 14:3-6). Since our jobs give us time off, it's a blessing for our homes. If there was ever a need for strengthening families, it is now. It gives parents time to teach children and spouses time to strengthen relationships (Deut. 6:6, 7; Eph. 5:25-29; 6:4).

CHRISTIANS MUST NOT CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AS A HOLY DAY. The word Christmas is not found in the Bible. It originated with the Catholic church ("Christ Mass") to commemorate Christ's birth and was first practiced in the Fourth Century. It was not practiced by Christians in Bible times. There is no command, example, or implication that one should celebrate Christmas in the Bible (cf. Rev. 22:18, 19). In fact the opposite is the case.

Paul addressed this issue (in principle) with the Galatian church: "Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain" (4:10, 11). The Colossian church faced those who wanted them to celebrate religious days and were told, "Let no man therefore judge you in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon,

or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (2:16, 17).

God expects Christians to strictly follow the Bible ("observe all things that I have commanded," Matt. 28:20; "speak as the oracles of God..." I Pet. 4:11; "do not go beyond what is written," III John 9; Col. 3:17). Therefore, we observe only one religious holiday-Sunday (Acts 20:7). God set this day apart to memorialize, not His Son's birth, but His death (I Con 11:20-24). Christians rejoice in this "unspeakable gift" fifty-two times a year!

People cannot actually celebrate Christ's birthday anyway because God did not reveal the birth date (perhaps because He knew people would celebrate it). Before the fourth century A.D., there were three guesses as to His birth (January 6; March 25, and December 25), December 25 was ordered as the day in A.D. 357 by Liberius, Bishop of Rome (Britannica Encyclopedia). World Book Encyclopedia says that day was chosen probably "...because the feast of the sun, or winter solstice, was a familiar Roman feast celebrating the victory of light over darkness." (Thus Christmas began as a Catholic compromise with paganism.) The evidence points to an autumn, or perhaps spring, date because shepherds are not in the fields from mid-October until mid-March in

Palestine (cf. Luke 2:8). Albert Barnes (Presbyterian) notes that Judean shepherds take flocks to the mountains in winter and only during summer months would they spend the nights with their flocks. It does not really matter when He was born, only that He was born (Matt. 1:21-25).

To pursue men's traditions is to make worship vain. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Jesus spoke of those who make "...the word of God of none effect through your traditions, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:13). It is wrong to celebrate religious days not authorized in the New Testament.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD AVOID LEAVING THE WRONG IMPRESSION WITH THE WORLD. Since influence is so important in converting the lost (I Pet. 3:1, 2), it behooves each Christian to guard his carefully (Rom. 14:21). During this time of year we should avoid giving the impression that we celebrate a religious holiday. Going about singing religious songs may be understood by us, but does it leave the impression that we are celebrating Christ's birthday? Cards sent with religious scenes also leave that impression, so we should choose cards without religious connotations. Nativity scenes, obviously, should not be placed in our yards or houses. "Christmas

plays" should also be avoided for the same reason. We should try to avoid the "religious" part of Christmas.

Go ahead, enjoy this festive time of year. Be thankful to God for all your blessings and joys, but be careful not to compromise the truth.

Unfortunately, I did not make note of the source of the preceding article. However, Allen Webster is the editor of *House to House Heart to Heart*, an outstanding brotherhood publication. The web address is: www.housetohouse.com.

Editor's Note: For further evidence of Judean winters in the first century, please take note of John 10:22-23: Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch.

The Feast of Dedication is what we now know as Hanukkah. Albert Barnes notes in his commentary on these verses: "The feast was celebrated in the winter. The word here implies that it was cold and inclement, and it is given as a reason why he walked in Solomon's porch"

(from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

The point is clear -- if it was too cold for our Lord to teach outside during Hanukkah, then it would have been too cold for shepherds to have been in the field on December 25. Again, Christ was not born on Christmas.

To become a child of God, one MUST obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One MUST..

Hear the Word of God - John 8:45; Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - John 3:16; 8:24

Repent of your sins - Luke 13:3, 5; II Peter 3:9

Confess Jesus is the Christ - Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37

Be baptized for the remission of your sins - Acts 2:38; 22:16

Live faithfully everyday - Matthew 10:22

The Good Tidings is an e-journal of New Testament Christianity published in portable document format and sent free to interested individuals via email. Its primary purpose and goal in publication is to “preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:16). Subscribers are encouraged to assist us in this effort by forwarding *The Good Tidings* to all their email contacts and by printing out copies for folks who do not have access to email. Send articles and subscription requests to the

Editor, Michael Willey, at
mbwilley@yahoo.com.

Be a better friend, newshound, and know-it-all with Yahoo! Mobile. [Try it now.](#)

Reply Forward | Delete

Message #7 of 8 < Prev | N

[Expand Messages](#)

Author Sort by

The Good Tidings, Dec. 2007

The Good Tidings "...I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God..."
(Luke 4:43) www.thegoodtidings.has.it December 12, 2007...

Michael Willey Dec 13
mbwilley 12:07
 

< Prev Topic | Next Topic >

Message # Search: [Advanced](#) [Sta](#)

SPONSOR RESULTS

[The Tides Beach Club](#)

www.tripadvisor.com - Find deals, read reviews from real people. Get the truth. Then go.

[Free Music Downloads](#)

www.SpiralFrog.com - Free & Legal Music Downloads. Get Your Favorite Song or Artist Today

[Tide Coupon](#)

www.ebay.com - Browse a huge selection now. Find exactly what you want today.