

CHRISTMAS

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Edited transcript of sermon preached

November 29, 2009

I'm going to preach a message this evening titled "Christmas." This is a review of three years ago. Most of the Scriptures I'm going to give you this evening were given then and even the same outline. The controversy about Christmas and the customs and practices that are associated with it has been raging for centuries, and except for a few years of compromise, for about 35 years, my wife and I have not participated in most of the Christmas celebrations that we see today. One of the reasons that I have not participated in most of the Christmas celebrations is because I am jealous for the name of Jesus Christ, and He is precious to me as in 1 Peter 2 and verse 7. I preached on that verse out of that chapter on Friday night at a rescue mission. The Lord Jesus is very precious to me.

Let me just say this to you as we get started this evening. I've gone back and considered some of my sermons because people will say, "Well, you don't love the Lord," but this year alone, I have preached sermons with the birth of Christ mentioned in them at least 10 to 15 times, and I'll probably preach on the birth of Christ at least once or twice as we get into the month of December. So we honor the Lord Jesus Christ. We honor His birth. My whole life is centered around Christ. Every message we preach in this church all come back to the Lord Jesus Christ one way or the other. So this is one of the reasons that I take a stand against the practices and customs during this time of year.

The apostle Paul is writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 3, and he says in verses 14 through 17, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*;¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Father, we thank You tonight for this privilege that You've given us again this day to assemble together. Lord, we ask Your blessings and anointing upon the reading of Scripture. We pray, Lord, that You would meet with us tonight. We pray, Lord, that You would speak to us, and, again, we thank You for this day, for it's in Jesus Christ's name we pray, Amen.

As we consider the subject of Christmas and whether we should participate in the activities around this time of year, I want to use verse 16 in 2 Timothy chapter 3 as a spring board to begin our message. Now, I'm not against being off on Christmas and getting together to have a meal and things like that. I'm not against those kinds of things — fellowship, getting together to worship the Lord and witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ and things of that nature — but I do have a problem with the time of year, and I have a problem with many of the customs and practices that I want to speak to you about this evening.

Over the last nearly 35 years, I have given liberty to people. My wife and I have never, that I can remember, sat down and tried to convince anybody not to celebrate Christmas, but since I've been preaching, I have preached on this subject a number of times from the pulpit, and I believe it's important that people know what I believe and what I see in the Bible that may help them.

We've been criticized many times over the years for our stand on the subject of Christmas. Now, I'm going to give you a few cautions here before I get into the Scripture, and I want to ask you tonight to be honest with me and admit that Christmas is not about Christ; it's really about us, is it not? You hear all the time, "Well, it's about the children." Well, what about Christ? It's not about Him, and that's what we're going to talk about tonight. And even we who are adults like Christmas, so I'm not going to lie to you. I like some of the things that are associated with Christmas, but because I like those things doesn't mean it's right.

So how is Christmas about Jesus Christ? Many times our focus is on ourselves and on our children, and the Lord Jesus Christ is nowhere in this celebration. We get frustrated. I see so much frustration around this time of year. People look like they're about half crazy running through the stores and trying to buy things for people they don't even like. And not only that, when Christmas comes to an end, many will say, "I'm glad this is over." Well, if it was about Christ, how could you be glad that it's over? And that very centerpiece, that Christmas tree that's the centerpiece of the whole thing, that beautiful tree that they spent so much time trimming with icicles and lights and the star and all these things on it, on the 26th of December, they kick the thing out the door and say, "Get this thing out of my house and put it in the garbage." Now, how is that about Jesus Christ? It's not. And I don't like deception, and there's a lot of deception and phoniness this time of year.

Now, if you're taking notes, let me give you four Scriptures to write down:

- **Acts chapter 17, verses 10 and 11.** The Bible says that the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things were so. They weren't searching novels and books and history, but they searched the Scripture.

- **In Acts chapter 20 and verse 27** the apostle Paul said to the church at Ephesus, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” He said I have given you everything that I know that God has given to me.
- **Exodus 23 and verse 2** says, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do evil*.” Now, that's a good verse. It has nothing to do with our subject tonight, but I like the passage.
- **In the first seven or eight verses in Matthew 19** it says, “. . . from the beginning it was not so.” That passage is talking about marriage and so forth, but I'm going to bring this over into our message on Christmas because for the first 300 years of church history, there was no celebration of Christ's birth.

We've had folks get upset over things that we've said in trying to be jealous for the name of Christ, loving Him, trying to exalt Him. You wouldn't believe the things that I've had to deal with over the years on the subject of Christmas. We've even had some folks in years gone by who wanted to bring in “The Nutcracker” ballet that was written by a sodomite in the 1800s. You know what I'm talking about. I'm talking about those ladies that have those garbage can lids around their waists showing off their underwear and the men running around in tights and walking around on their toes. You know what I'm talking about — all that silly stuff. Some folks wanted to bring that music into the church for Christmastime, and I said no.

Revelation 22:18-19 says not to add to or subtract from God's Word, and I want you to see that the Bible and the authority of Scripture is all that we need for faith and practice, and tonight we're going to talk about truth versus tradition. If I'm going to err, I want to err on the side of safety, and I believe that I'm on the side of safety with this subject. And I'll tell you this. I have total peace in my heart around this time of year. I have total peace about what I believe, what we're doing. We're not frustrated. We enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ. We exalt His name, His birth, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His return. We talk about Him. We witness. We have total peace, and we're not frustrated and caught up in all these silly activities at this time of year. There are only two birthdays that are celebrated, by the way, in the Scriptures, and one was Pharaoh and the other one was Herod. Think about that for a while.

The Scriptures and Christ's birth

As we read 2 Timothy, verse 16, I want you to see that we don't need to go outside of the Scripture as far as knowing what God wants us to do. In verse 16 we have these words: “All scripture *is given by inspiration of God*” — that is, given to us by the Spirit of God — “and *is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*” So the first thing I want to talk to you about this evening is the Scriptures and Christ's birth.

No one knows the day that Jesus Christ was born. No one knows the month that Jesus Christ was born. Over the years there have been many months and many dates that have been established from January to March to May, September, December, but God did not establish this holy day or holiday that's coming up. Now, I want you to think about this. The Scriptures are silent about the date of Christ's birth, and neither Christ nor the apostles commanded the celebration of His birth nor spoke about it; and not only that, there are no examples anywhere in the New Testament for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. There is nothing in the Scriptures that we can follow and set a pattern and say, "This is what we're to do on December the 25th." And not only that, for the first 300 years of church history, the church did not celebrate this holiday.

Again, I'm for the birth of Jesus Christ. I've already preached on it several times this year. One of those sermons was "The Mystery of Godliness" out of 1 Timothy. I'm for speaking of His birth and speaking of His birth often and His death, His burial, His resurrection — everything about Jesus Christ. That's what we live for. Everything that we do in this church is centered around the Lord Jesus Christ, but I'm saying to you that as far as a holy day that's been set, God has not commanded this in Scripture.

Verse 15 says, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures . . ." That's what we're dealing with tonight — the Holy Scriptures. Our Bible is not a novel or just another book in the library. And he said, ". . . the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Then in verse 16 he said, "All scripture" — the entire Bible — "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." As far as our doctrine, as far as everything that we believe and practice, God has given it to us in Holy Scripture. And then verse 17 says, "That the man of God may be perfect" — that is, fitted, prepared — "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Everything that I need for faith and practice is given to me in the Scriptures, and when I go outside the boundaries of Scripture, I am going to be violating God's principles.

It is true that Jesus Christ had to be born and He had to die. That's in Galatians 4, verses 4 and 5. But the Apostle Paul said in Galatians chapter 4, verse 11, "I am afraid of you..." He said in verse 10, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." There is a warning that is given there.

Now, 1 Corinthians chapter 11 establishes an ordinance that we are to remember and observe, and that ordinance is the Lord's Supper, Communion. We are commanded to observe this ordinance, as it is called. First Corinthians chapter 11, verses 23 and 24, says, "For

I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: ²⁴And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*; and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." This is something that's commanded, and it says in verses 25 and 26, "After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. ²⁶For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." This is something that's given to us in the Scripture that is commanded and that we are to observe.

Now, we're to remember the Lord's birth. It's given to us in a number of places. But nowhere in the Bible does the church have the authority to set a holy day and say that this is the birth of Jesus Christ when it is not the birth of Jesus Christ. You see, Christ's birth is very important, and, yes, we're to remember it, but only God can establish a holy day. Now, our nation may recognize a number of days — July 4th, the birthday of our nation, Thanksgiving and different things of that nature. There will be a number of holidays throughout the year. You can participate in them or not; that's your business or whether you think they're worthy of participating in. But when we come to the subject of Christmas, we're talking about a holy day that was set basically by the Catholic Church. You see, Christmas — Christ Mass — is a Mass. It is considered as a holy day, and what liberty does anyone have to establish a holy day and then lie about the birthday of Christ.

The term "Christmas" is a combination of two words — Christ and Mass. It's literally a Roman Catholic celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. The word "Mass" means celebration. It means a memorial, a commemoration. It's the celebration of Christ's birth, but it was established basically by the Roman Catholic Church, and Catholics even claim authorship over this holiday. Pope Julius I said that Christ was born December the 25th, and that's accepted by most Catholics today. Now, what if I came along and said, "No, it's September the 15th," and somebody else came along and said, "It's May 3rd," and somebody else said, "No, it's March the 5th." Who has the authority to establish something that's not given to us in Scripture? I've asked people to give me one Scripture to show us that December 25th is Christ's birthday. Just put aside the practices and customs and Santa Claus and all this stuff — just one verse.

In Leviticus chapter 23 there are annual holy days, and these annual holy days were instituted and regulated by the Lord God. In other words, God did not leave it to the imaginations of men. He set the day, the year, the time of the year, the month, and he laid down the regulations for these days. They were Sabbaths and weekly Sabbaths and they were feast days, and the Lord said, "Here's when you're to do it and here's how you are to do it."

The Scripture and the Origin of Christmas

I want to read two verses from Ezekiel chapter 22. I'm not going to go into as much detail as I did a few years back, but I'm still going to give you pretty much the outline that we tried to cover. I'm going to read some quotes by some men that deal with Christmas, and I have these here in my hand. I also have many more quotes in my office. I probably have a hundred quotes from encyclopedias, Christian and secular, and also from ministers throughout the history of the church, and one after another says that Christmas has pagan roots.

Now, what do I mean when I say "the origin of Christmas"? Well, Christmas is a mixture of Christianity and paganism. It mingles right with wrong. It mingles truth and false. And here's the question I have to ask: At what point does paganism end and Christianity begin in this whole time of year? I believe it is a compromise. It's a mixture of true and false worship, and the Lord Jesus Himself said in John 4, verse 24, that we must worship God in spirit and in truth.

When we consider the origin of Christmas, historians and scholars, theologians and encyclopedias, both secular and religious, all have a lot to say about this time of year. Christmas originated as a Christian alternative to the heathen festivals at the same time of the year. The first recorded celebration of Christmas on December the 25th took place in the Roman Empire in AD 336, and about 350 AD, December 25th was declared the official date for celebrating Christ's birth, and in the Jerusalem church, the celebration began about 440 AD. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on the origin of Christmas because that is not that important to me. I'm more concerned with the customs and practices of today and how they do not line up with Scripture. But long before Christ's birth, December the 25th was observed in Rome by ancient pagans as the birth of the sun god who was known by different names among different nations. We talk about the winter solstice, the shortest day and the longest night of the year. The unconquered sun survived the winter as the pagans saw this, and to appease their god, they had festivals, sacrifices, gifts and revelry and things of that nature at this time of year. Now, there are a lot of things written on this. Some of it's good and some of it's not. But there's a lot of material that's written on the origin of Christmas, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this.

Ezekiel 20:39 says, ". . . pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts," and as we come to Ezekiel chapter 22, verse 26 says, "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." They put no difference between what is holy

and what is unholy. This chapter is describing the sins of Jerusalem, and it says in verse 30, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." God was looking for men who would stand in the gap, stand for the truth, live the truth and also preach the truth, and He said He couldn't find one.

In 1 Kings in the Old Testament, Israel's sin was not a total rejection of God, but their sin was combining the worship of God and the worship of Baal. In 1 Kings 18:17, Elijah is accused of troubling Israel. The preacher is accused of causing trouble in the nation, and the preacher accused the king of causing trouble. First Kings chapter 18 is the showdown between Elijah and the Baal worshippers. Verse 21 says, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word." See, they didn't deny God. They just combined the worship of God with the worship of Baal and all this pagan stuff and went on about their business, and Elijah said, "Hey, get on one side or the other and quit straddling the fence."

Idolatry is a major issue and a violation of God's Word. The first three commandments in Exodus chapter 20, verses 1 through 7, deal with idolatry, and we're going to see that idolatry is the worship of false gods or it is the worship of the true God in a false way. Let me say that again. Idolatry is either the worship of false gods or it is the worship of the true God in a false way. The first two commandments deal with this. We're not to worship false gods, neither are we to worship the true God in a false way, and he describes the false way. One writer said, "We are no more at liberty to worship the true God in a false way than we are to worship false gods." So it's very important not to worship false gods, neither the true God in a false way.

Idolatry is an insult to God's majesty. It is an abomination, and it is a sin against our Creator. In Exodus chapter 34 in verse 14 we see that God is a jealous God. He is a very jealous God. First Kings chapter 11 throughout the chapter beginning in verse 5 is where Solomon got caught up in idolatry. In 2 Chronicles chapter 33, verses 15 through 17, God told Israel to destroy the high places, the pagan places of worship, when Israel entered the Promised Land, and in Deuteronomy chapter 12, verses 2 through 4, God said, "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: ³And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. ⁴Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God." In other words, you're not to worship your God the way that they

worship their gods. We're not to imitate the heathen in any way. He says in verses 29 to 32, "When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; ³⁰Take heed" — Now, here's the warning — "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. ³¹Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. ³²What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." So God is saying destroy every idol and every place and even the name of the other gods. He's saying destroy everything. And He said don't add to the Word, don't take away from the Word. He said don't serve me the way that they serve their idols and their gods.

In 1 Kings chapter 12, verses 32 to 33, Jeroboam instituted a feast to God that was not appointed by God, and you can read about the consequences of that. Jeroboam altered the manner and the place of worship from the true and living God. He changed the place of worship and the manner of worship, and God did not smile on that.

Let me read a few quotes before I get back into the Scriptures. Again, I have not seen any records in church history of the church celebrating for the first 300 years what we see today to be Christmas. In Geneva in Calvin's day, you could be fined or imprisoned for celebrating Christmas. Now, I'm not for fining people and punishing them for celebrating Christmas. They'd like to do that to us, but I'm not for that. I'm just letting you know what was a reality at that time:

"In England in 1644, at the request of the Westminster Assembly, the English Parliament passed an act forbidding the observance of Christmas, calling it a heathen holiday. When Protestants attempted to rid itself of Roman Catholicism, there also came an opposition to Christmas that almost obliterated it entirely in England. In England the Puritans could not tolerate the celebrating for which there was no biblical sanction. For a period of twelve years, the staunch Puritans kept the shackles on Christmas making it an ordinary day of business and even a day of fasting. Yet with the restoration in 1660, the citizens reclaimed Christmas. The Puritans looked at Christmas as a work of Satan. The Puritans regarded it as a pagan holiday."

They went quite far with this.

"In America and Protestant America and the founding fathers, many of them considered Christmas as a popish holiday. It was not till the 19th century that Christmas had any religious significance in Protestant churches in America. In America people stood against the celebration from 1620 to 1750."

That's about 130 years.

Do you remember what day it was in 1776 that George Washington crossed the Delaware? It was Christmas day. He was really honoring the day, wasn't he? He fought a battle on that day. On the other side were the German Hessians, and George Washington won the battle on Christmas day because the Hessians were celebrating.

Now, I'm not saying I'm for all of this. I'm just telling you what was the reality.

"In early American history, the Puritans passed similar laws as in England. In New England the observance of Christmas was suppressed. The New Englanders worked steadily through December 25th, 1620, in studied neglect of the day. The Mayflower pilgrims landed in 1620. The first December 25th was spent in labor in cutting down trees in order to avoid frivolity on the day sometimes called Christmas."

Another quote says:

"A law was adopted in the General Court of Massachusetts about 1650 which required those who celebrated Christmas to be punished. The status read, 'Whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or any other shall be subject to a fine of five shillings.' The law's preamble explained its purpose was for preventing disorder by observing such festivals as were superstitiously kept in other countries to the great dishonor of God and the offense of others."

Some people took this very seriously. You say, "Well, they took it too far." The thing is, they took it very seriously.

And then another quote:

"Opposition to the observance of Christmas continued just past the second half of the 19th century. An article in the December 26th, 1865 edition of the New York Daily Times stated, 'The churches of Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists were not open on December 25th except where some mission schools had a celebration. They do not accept the day as a holy day.'"

Now, this was Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists in the early 1800s. It goes on to say:

"But the Episcopalians and Catholics and the German churches were all open. Inside they were decked with evergreens."

Now, this was an article that came out in 1865 on December 26th in the New York Daily Times, and it says that at this time the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and Methodists did not consider Christmas as a holy day, but the Episcopalians, the Catholics, and the German churches considered it as a holy day and had their celebrations.

Just a few other quotes and I'm through:

"As late as 1789 the United States government did not have an official celebration of Christmas, and, in fact, Congress was in session on December the 25th, 1789, and remained in session each year for the next 67 years before it was made an official celebration by the United States government. Eventually the major Protestant denominations accepted Christmas because of Catholic influence in America. Until 1870 public schools continued to meet on Christmas day."

One last quote:

"In 1836 Alabama declared Christmas a state holiday, and not until after the Civil War did other states follow."

Now, you've heard me preach many times over the years in this church, and there are things that we have done or that we do, customs and whatever that we think have been around 2,000 years, and when we look at the Scriptures and consider history, we find that they've not been around that long. Many Christians over the years stood against this holiday. It's not that they hated Christ. They loved Christ and they were zealous for His name.

The Scriptures and Customs and Traditions

Colossians 2:8 says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Over the centuries a number of customs and traditions have emerged to make Christmas season one of the most colorful and festive times of the year. There are many unscriptural traditions that have cluttered the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. Have you ever thought about even the nativity scene? Folks are usually not threatened by a little baby in a manger, but there is a threat when you talk about the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and that He's coming back one day in judgment. That is a threat to those who reject Him and don't want to have

anything to do with our Lord and Savior. A little baby in a manger is not a threat. Many can tolerate that.

What we're going to read in Jeremiah 10 was written about 600 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. We're going to talk a few moments about the Christmas tree. Is it beautiful? Be honest with me. Yes, it's very beautiful. It becomes the centerpiece. Over the years my wife and I have referred to it as "the Baal bush." You can call it whatever you want, but it is absolutely beautiful, and it is probably the most popular symbol of Christmas. There are many legends and myths about the Christmas tree. You can go back to the ancient druid and there are legends. In Catholicism there are legends. In ancient Rome there are legends. And then Martin Luther, the Reformer. It just depends on where you want to go and what you want to accept. One statement about the Christmas tree says, "The Christmas tree is a direct descendent of the Paradise Tree used in Paradise and Passion plays in the Middle Ages. These mystery plays were put on all across Europe. One of the most popular was the Paradise Play, which was the story of Adam and Eve and the two trees. The play ended with the promise of the coming Savior, Genesis 3:15." And it says that the Paradise Tree was adorned with apples.

In our time in which we live, there are millions of healthy, perfectly good trees that are sacrificed around this time of year. I was going to preach Friday night, and I saw two tied on top of an SUV. They died because of this holiday — perfectly healthy trees — and I've got to ask the question as I've asked many people who oppose me on this. I've laid the Bible in their lap, and I've said, "Give me one verse in the Bible that shows me that the Christmas tree has any connection with the birth of Jesus Christ," and for 35 years, no one has shown me one verse. Do you know why? Because it's not there. There's not one verse that connects the birth of Jesus Christ with a tree with lights and icicles and all these things hanging off of it. Yes, they're beautiful, but there's not one verse that connects that with the birth of Jesus Christ, and yet it is the centerpiece of the home at Christmastime.

A few years back, a friend of mine took me to Isaiah 60, and he said, "I'm going to show you where the Christmas tree comes from and that it's right and it's holy." We read the chapter, and it's not there. And he knew it wasn't there. He was just trying to justify something he likes. If you like it and if you want to do it, do it. You have to stand before God one of these days. There are a lot of things about Christmas I can like, but when we come to the Lord's Word, it's not an issue of do I like it; it's an issue of what is right and what is wrong. Sort of like salvation. We've got to see what God has said in His Word.

A few years ago someone said, "Well, my German heritage . . ." I don't care about your German heritage. It's all right if you've got a German heritage, but I don't care about the

myths and things of that nature. What if I said, "Well, what about my Irish and Cherokee heritage? Let me give you some legends there." You might not care about them either — either one of them. You put those two together, and you've got a mess.

As we come to Jeremiah chapter 10, in verse 3 we see customs of the people, and God says they're vain. The context is dealing with idolatry. I'm not saying that the context is referring to a Christmas tree as we know it today, and most do not connect this with Christmas. But you've got to consider the wording of this text. Jeremiah 10:2-5 says: "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. ³For the customs of the people *are* vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. ⁴They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. ⁵They *are* upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also *is it* in them to do good."

I did not say this is a Christmas tree. This passage has to do with idols, but I want you to notice the similarities. And when you go to the Scriptures and there's not one verse in the entire Bible that can show you that that tree has something to do with the birth of Jesus Christ, I would be very leery of it. If you want to put one up, that's your business, but don't say that that thing has anything to do with our Savior, because it doesn't. It may be beautiful, it may be pretty. I mean, I can sit and look at one for hours — the lights flashing and blinking on it. They're absolutely beautiful, but they have nothing to do with the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Christmas tree has pagan origins. I don't know how true they are, and it's not really that important to me, but I've read many stories of pagans in various countries who decorated trees and what it symbolized long before the birth of Christ. Many historians agree that the practice of putting up trees and decorating them for Christmas arose in Germany in the early 16th century at the beginning of the Reformation. Many will agree on that, and I've got quotes here that mention a decorated tree in one house in 1605, and around 1700, the Christmas trees were appearing in the New World as German immigrants came to America. Actually, 1830 would be the first record. Most Americans regarded them at that time as pagan. It's amazing how things are accepted as time goes on — stood against hard at one time, but as years go by, the compromise begins, and over a period of time, we see the watering down of the truth.

Matthew 15:3 says, "But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" and verse 6 says, "And honour not his father

or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Now, these verses have nothing to do with Christmas; they have to do with something else. But I'm reading these verses because the people made the Word of God of none effect through tradition. And verses 7 through 9 says, "*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, ⁸This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. ⁹But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.*" We see here traditions of men versus the Word of God. So when we just consider customs and traditions, if people want a Christmas tree, fine. I'm not offended by them. I could sit and eat lunch beside one of them. It doesn't bother me at all. But I'm simply saying it has nothing to do with the birth of Jesus Christ, and I'd have to ask the question, "Why am I putting this up?"

Now, what about gifts? I think the only place in the Bible where people are exchanging gifts is in the context of wicked men celebrating the death of God's servants. It's in Revelation 11:10. But am I against giving gifts? No. We've given a few gifts away to a few people in the last week or two. I love getting gifts, don't you? Love giving them. It's quite a blessing to be able to give them, but this whole time of year is centered around commercialization, and you and I know that. Just a few days ago on Black Friday people were trampling over each other, angry, frustrated, standing in line at 35 degrees at 3 o'clock in the morning. I won't even get into a deer stand at that time. I'm surely not going to stand in front of Walmart at that time. I'm telling you, it's about money. It's a merchant's holiday. It is a day of great profit to the world. Between 40 and 50 percent of a retailer's annual sales comes from Black Friday until the day of Christmas — 40 to 50 percent. Don't tell me that Christmas is not a merchant's holiday.

Christmas brings billions of dollars. In Japan, one half of one percent of the population profess Christ as Savior, but they're nuts about Christmas. Money is the reason for the season. That's what needs to be in all the publications. Liquor sales increase. I know of people right now who will have credit card debt throughout next year for what they spend at Christmas. Think about it. Just think this through. The celebration of Christmas brings bondage. It's about covetousness and greed and debt and excess and all these kinds of things, and people will fight you over this and say, "Well, I don't worship the tree" and all this kind of stuff. Well, what is all this about? Revelation 18:11 through 19 is dealing with Mystery Babylon, and when this thing melts down one day — and it will melt down when the Lord says so — when everything melts down, they're going to weep and cry because the merchants and all these things are going to crash.

Now, again, I want you to understand that I'm not against giving gifts, but gift-giving is not a re-enactment of Matthew chapter 2. The wise men didn't exchange gifts with one another and ignore the child. Who did they bring the gifts to? They brought them to the Lord Jesus Christ. It was an Eastern custom to present gifts when coming into the presence of a king. In the Old Testament, the Queen of Sheba gave gifts to Solomon when she came into his presence. So we're not talking about a birthday celebration. And the wise men didn't come to the manger. They came to the house probably two years after Christ was born, and they presented gifts to the King. Matthew chapter 2, verse 11, says, "[And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh,](#)" which has to do with Christ being a Prophet, Priest and King as the Savior of the world.

What about Santa Claus? I know that many Christians say, "Well, we don't have anything to do with that." But he's still a factor. I gave you an article about how Coca-Cola created the modern-day Santa Claus. Is he not a god of some sort? — Tell him what you want for Christmas; he knows everything; he knows the behavior of children and rewards them for being good and punishes them for being bad; he visits every house in the world in one night. If that's not a god, I don't know what is. And he lives where? The North Pole. Which way is that pointed toward? Heaven. Santa Claus is a lie, and he's a big, fat slob in a red suit is what he is. We just might as well tell the truth about him. He's a lie, and Ephesians 4:25 says we're not to lie to one another. Now, 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 3 and 4, says, "[But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.](#)" See, we have here the god of this world. Even if St. Nicholas, this Roman Catholic figure, did not exist, so what? Even most of the encyclopedias tell us the truth about Santa Claus.

What about the music during this time of year? Look at all the secular stuff. Much of it does not honor God. Even the theology in some of the Christmas carols is not correct. There are songs in the secular scene like "Santa Claus is Coming to Town"; "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" — Oh, that's got to be lovely and about the birth of Christ; "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" — Well, you can forget about it on the coast, Amen? — "Jingle Bells"; "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"; "Up on the Housetop" — all these songs on the radio stations and everyone playing them as you go into the stores. And look at the lyrics in some of these songs. The festivities, the parties, the busyness, the gluttony, the drunkenness — how can any of this honor the Lord Jesus Christ — even the nativity scenes that I've mentioned

to you before, the mother and child. I preached earlier this year on pictures of Christ and we wrote an article on this some years ago. We see in Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 12, "And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice." God appeared to them. They didn't see a picture or a figure. They saw no similitude. Verse 15 says, "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." And in verses 23 and 24, we have these words: "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. ²⁴For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." And verse 25 talks about not corrupting yourselves with graven images or a likeness of anything that might resemble God. I believe this is talking about statues and images and pictures and things of that nature. So why is it okay to have a Mary statue as long as it's in the house or in the church with the baby Jesus? It wouldn't be okay with Protestants or Baptists any other time — would it? — but it's okay as long as you've got the baby Jesus, you see. There are many religions around the world that worship around the mother/child — Babylon, Catholicism, Egypt, Rome, India, China, Greece. And, again, the world glories in Christ in a manger but not the Christ on the cross, for the cross is foolishness to them that believe not. It's foolishness. But they can glory in the manger and the babe.

Now, notice as we come to Revelation chapter 17 that there is a religious institution that is given to us in this chapter. God has a bride, but there is a whore mentioned here in Revelation 17. Beginning with verse 1, it says, "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters." The waters in verse 15 have to do with peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. This whore has a lot of influence. Verse 2 says, "With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication" — now, notice that — "and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. ³So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour" — notice the colors — "and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: ⁵And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Now, I want you to think about this — a religious institution that has a lot of influence and control in the world, and in verse 18 it's called a city and there are seven hills associated with this city.

Continuing with verse 6: "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." Do you know of any religious institution with these colors that's very wealthy that is a city and has killed literally millions of the people of God throughout the centuries? Do you know of any religious institution like that? Let me not even mention names. You just think about the description here.

Notice verse 18: "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Many nations, including the U.S., have an ambassador in this city. Our President Reagan many years ago put an ambassador in Rome to represent the United States before this city and this religious empire. In Revelation 18 the apostle John said in verses 1 through 4: "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. ²And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. ³For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. ⁴And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Babylon the Great has roots in ancient Babylon. Every known form of idolatry has its connection with ancient Babylon. One of the greatest of all abominations is this false worship. Now, like I said, for the first 300 years of church history, we see no worship of Christmas on December the 25th. In the fourth century, Constantine married the church and the state. Emperor Constantine began the paganization of the church. The church had conquered the Roman Empire, but in reality, the Roman Empire had conquered the church, and Christianity became a state religion. Now, I'm not talking about true Christianity. You see, the church has changed its nature. Let me give you a quote: "It has changed its nature. It entered into apostasy, had become a political organization, had become a different institution from the persecuted church of the first three centuries." Revelation 19:2 says, "For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 6, verses 14 through 18, that we're to come out from among them and be a separate people. We're called a peculiar people in 1 Peter 2 and Titus chapter 2 as Israel was in the Old Testament in Exodus chapter 19, and we know that we are to be different from the world.

John 8, verse 32, says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Consider this truth, pray about this truth, and examine your hearts as to what God would have you to do. The debate has been going on — especially from about 2005 — about putting Christ back in Christmas. Well, I say that He never was in Christmas, and let the pagans have their holiday. Jesus is not the reason for the season. Now, I believe in taking advantage of this time of year. It's a good opportunity to witness as you go into banks and stores and shopping malls and places like that. It's a tremendous opportunity to show people the peace of God that He'll give us in our hearts, and they can avoid this bondage and this corruption and this frustration at this time of year. I love this time of year, I really do. Between right now and the end of this year, I love this time of year. It's a great time of year for me because I'm not frustrated. Proverbs chapter 14, verse 12, says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death," and James 4:4 says that you cannot be the friend of the world and the friend of God. First John 2:15 says, "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world," and Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world."

I've already mentioned that it's not threatening placing emphasis on the birth of Christ, but if you were to place emphasis on the cross, it's a different story. Now, when we compromise, two things happen: (1) the Lord is not pleased with it and (2) no one will take us seriously. Have you ever thought about that? Do you ever wonder why the church across our land is kind of a big joke today with most people? They don't take it seriously. If the church is going to lie about this time of year, what about other things that we tell people? You say, "Well, I like it." Well, I like it too. My wife loves to decorate. She'd decorate your car or your mule if you leave it sitting long enough. I mean, she loves to decorate. But, again, is the issue the truth, or is the issue do we like it?

Now, what about birthdays? What if on October the 20th we were going to celebrate Brian's birthday, and we all meet at my house and have a party, and we give each other gifts and ignore Brian and his name is hardly even brought up. Would that bother him? Yes, it would. Yes, it would.

Epilogue

Coming back to what I said earlier, who has the right to set a date for the birth of Jesus Christ without scriptural grounds? The Catholic Church set the date. It's the most sacred day on the calendar. I see that little sparkle in the eyes of people when they're thinking and talking about and anticipating Christmas. I don't see that sparkle too much when we talk about the Lord's Day fifty-two times out of the year. What is it about this day? You see, it's about us; it's about the children; it's about what I'm going to get and that kind of stuff. You know that I'm telling you the truth. Now, people don't like it, but you know I'm telling you the truth.

One last passage, Luke 16, verse 15: "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Obedience is better than sacrifice. When the world loves something, you better sit down and evaluate it, and when the world hates something, you better sit down and evaluate it. You can miss the boat either way there. I'm saying to you that Jesus is not the reason for the season. We're going to close right there.

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