

# The BEACON

Published by the Newton church of Christ  
Meeting at: St. James Church Rd and Glendale Ave

Vol. 23, No. 12

Edited by John Cripps

December ,2009



## The Truth About Christmas by George G. Pennock Waukesha, Wisconsin

As we enter the season of the year when many of our friends and neighbors are observing the birthday of Christ, it is appropriate that we give some time to a careful study of Christmas. In this article we will attempt to give you a comprehensive picture of the truth about Christmas. Some of the material presented has been adapted from James L. Dennison's booklet, "The History Of Christmas" and Eris B. Benson's work, "The Question Of Christmas." We lay no claim to originality. Have you ever stopped and thought about the origin and history of Christmas? We are prone to take so many things for granted! Where did Christmas come from? Who authorized it? Many of us will quickly answer that it was ordained by God, and originated when Christ was born. But are you sure of this? Could you prove it from the Bible? Permit us to deal with some of the traditions which most of us have taken for granted, yet which have no foundation either in scripture or in history.

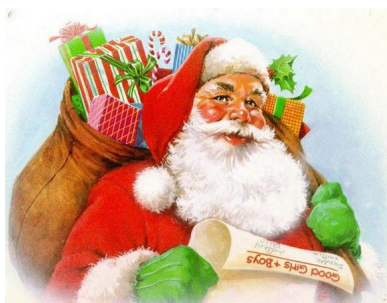
### When Was Christ Born?

First is the idea that Christ was born on December 25, in the year 1 A.D. The exact year, the exact month, and the exact day in which

Christ was born is uncertain. We cannot determine the exact year in which He was born, for it was 750 odd years after this event before our present method of measuring time came into existence. Dionysius Exiguus (who first proposed to date all events from the birth of Christ) made an error in his calculations. (The Book Of Knowledge, Vol. 4, page 1453). If his calculations be correct, then Herod the Great (who sought to kill Jesus) died four years before our Savior was born. His error is evident to all who believe the Bible to, be the product of God. It can safely be said that Jesus was born between the year 7 B.C. and 4

B.C.

It is even more difficult to pinpoint the month. Mr. Albert Barnes, the noted Presbyterian commentator, says that the exact time of His birth is unknown and that there is no way to ascertain it. He admits that "By different learned men it has been fixed at each month in the year." He concludes that it is very unlikely that Jesus was born on December 25, or even during the winter season, for, "There were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night" (Luke 2:8). During the winter months, it is cold, and



especially in the high and mountainous regions about Bethlehem. Shepherds were not in the habit of spending the night in the open at this time of the year" (Barnes Notes, Luke 2:8). The actual birth date of our Lord remains unknown, but it is almost certain that it was not December 25.

Every month of the year has been claimed at one time or another as the month in which the Christ child came into the world. The three most ardently contended for are December 25, January 6, and March 25. Today the Armenian church celebrates Christmas on January 10.

### Why December 25?

Why then, you will ask, was December 25 finally accepted in preference to some other date? "December 25 was first declared to be the birthday of Christ by Liberius, bishop of Rome in 354 A.D." (World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, page 1425). Why did Liberius choose December 25? This encyclopedia further declares that it was probably chosen, "Because of the feast of the sun, or winter solstice, a Roman feast which was traditionally celebrated at this time." The heathens, supposedly converted to Christ, were allowed to keep their period of festivities, but were urged to transfer their devotions from the physical sun to God's Son. The observance then of December 25 had its origin in heathenistic paganism, and was incorporated into Christianity by a bishop of the old Catholic school.

Why then, do you keep December 25 as the birthday of Christ? Because Christ has asked you to, or because God has ever sanctioned such? No, but because a Catholic bishop **ORDERED** that this date be adopted. To observe December 25 as the birthday of Christ, is to bow to a Catholic edict; and to recognize an authority which this organization has ever

assumed, but which God has never invested in any man - the power and authority to speak and legislate for God, where God has chosen Himself to be silent. If God had desired to place special significance upon the birthdate of His Son, He would have urged this observance upon Christians in New Testament times and He would have revealed the date unto us in His word.

### The "Three" Wisemen

How many wisemen followed the star to Bethlehem? Surprised to be asked such a simple question, you quickly answer, "Three." But again, are you sure? Could you prove it? The Bible simply says, "Wisemen from the east came to, Jerusalem" (Matthew 2:21 ). The term "men" simply denotes more than one. There may have been two, and there could have been two-hundred. Again history is absolutely no help, for at different times, people have accepted different traditions concerning the number of these men. To contend for "three" is to blindly accept the assertions of the Roman church.

### Christmas

Where did the term "Christmas" come from? What does it mean? You may quickly respond that it simply designates the day on which Christ was born. Is this true? Even a casual observer will immediately spot the "Christ" in Christmas. What does "mas" mean ? Does it signify a birthday? Just what do we connect with Christ in this expression? The Catholic scholar, James Cardinal Gibbons, admits that the "mas" in Christmas is derived from the Catholic sacrifice of the mass (Faith Of Our Fathers, Page 355); as it's also true in Candelmas - a special Catholic mass celebrated early in February each year, and at which all candles to be used in religious services during the year are blessed. Christmas

then literally means "Christ's mass" or the "mass of Christ" and properly denotes a Catholic mass, said and performed in honor of Christ. Do you believe in Christmas, Christ's mass or the mass of Christ? Christmas is purely a Catholic expression and spiritually conveys nothing at all to a simple New Testament Christian.

### **Santa Claus**

Leaving the wisemen and the word Christmas let us turn our attention to another misunderstood tradition of the holiday season. Do you tell your children about a little fat, jovial man who brings all sorts of wonderful things to good boy and girls? Does your home eagerly await the coming of Santa Claus? Who is this gent "Santa Claus"? Where did he come from? If you remember the poem, "The Night Before Christmas," you no doubt remember the line, "In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there." Santa Claus and St. Nicholas are the same person. The English term "Santa Claus" is a corruption of the Dutch term for St. Nicholas, "Sinter Klass."

"St. Nicholas was a real bishop who lived in the fourth century and became **THE PATRON SAINT OF CHILDREN** (emphasis mine) . . . In America, St. Nicholas not only became Santa Claus to little boys and girls, but the bishop's robe was transformed into a warm red suit, and his visits were transferred to Christmas Eve." (The Book Of Knowledge, Vol. 3, page 922). Parents remember, when you honor Santa Claus, you honor a Catholic Saint! When you teach your child to look to St. Nicholas for presents, you teach that child to look to the Catholic **PATRON SAINT OF CHILDREN** for blessings! Shocking isn't It?

In modern times the truths about Christmas have been banished to the attic of knowledge and covered with the cobwebs of ignorance. A

principle of truth may be ignored; it may be denied; it may be intimidated; it may be cursed; it may be buried and eventually lost; but it can never be altered or changed! Truth ever remains truth! But, you ask, have not others in the past uncovered these truths? Have protestants always meekly submitted to the authority of a Roman bishop? Have nonCatholics always been deceived in this matter?

### **The Scotch Presbyterians**

"Until recently, children in (Scotch) Presbyterian families had no Christmas. Even yet it is not a popular holiday in Scotland" (The New Standard Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, article on "Christmas"). But, why do the Scotch object to Christmas? "The Scotch Presbyterians generally rejected all religious observance of the day (Christmas) as a 'human institution,' and savoring too much of 'papist' "(The New International Encyclopedia, Vol. 5, page 290). Is this not the basis of our objection?

### **The English Non-conformists**

In 17th century England, all religious bodies that refused to, conform to the state church, were referred to as non-conformists. These non-conforming groups objected to Christmas on the same grounds as the Scotch Presbyterians. They recognized it as "A human institution and a product of the papacy" (Ibid). "In England the observance of Christmas was forbidden by an act of Parliament in 1644" (Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 5, page 641). It was revived by Charles II. It is admitted by historians that Charles II harbored sympathies for the Catholic cause.

### **The Pilgrim Fathers**

It may surprise you to know that during the formative period of this great country, many people could be found who conscientiously objected strenuously to the celebration of

Christmas. "Long ago in the Puritan colonies . . . Christmas was not observed. In fact, the stern old Puritan fathers made a law forbidding anyone to celebrate Christmas on pain of arrest and punishment" ( The Book Of Knowledge, Vol. 6, page 2095). All Americans should understand why their forefathers objected to Christmas. The Puritan was an austere fellow, caring little for the pleasures of life. Is this why he rejected the celebration of Christmas? Some have suggested that it was, but this is merely an attempt to hide the facts. The facts tell a different story. "The orthodox Puritans of New England objected to the observance of Christmas on the ground that this was a Catholic custom. Accordingly, except in Rhode Island, Christmas was not celebrated in New England at any time during the colonial period" (A Short History Of The American People, page 170).

Are we peculiar? Do we stand alone in opposing the observance of December 25 as the birthday of Christ? No! In opposing this day we join an elite group who have consistently refused to recognize the authority of the Roman Pontiffs!

### **Let's Take "Christ" Out of Christmas**

We invite you to draw aside the curtain of our garbled facts, weighed down with prejudice, that so long has concealed the truth on this subject from the average person. Beyond that curtain shines, undimmed, the following truths:

1. The year of Christ's birth is unknown!
2. The day of Christ's birth is unknown!
3. The observance of December 25 had its origin in heathenistic paganism.
4. December 25 was first declared to be the birthday of Christ in 354 J.D. when Liberius, bishop of Rome ORDERED that this day be adopted.

5. To accept December 25 as the birthday of Christ is to submit to a Catholic edict, and to bow to the authority of the church of Rome.
6. To contend for "three" wise men is again to blindly accept the assertions of the Roman church.
7. Christmas literally means "Christ's mass" or the "Mass of Christ" and properly denotes a Catholic mass said and Performed in honor of Christ.
8. When you teach your child to look to Santa Claus or St. Nicholas for presents you teach that child to look to the Catholic PATRON SAINT OF CHILDREN for blessings.
9. The Pilgrim fathers made a law forbidding anyone to celebrate Christmas on pain of arrest and punishment, for Christmas was a "Catholic custom."
10. In opposing December 25 as the birthday of Christ, we join an elite group who have consistently refused to bow the knee to the authority of the Roman pontiffs.

"My Protestant friends, you received the term Protestant because your early leaders protested against the innovations that Roman Catholicism introduced into Christianity. Why do you not live up to your name? Be real Protestants, not in name only, but in action, and protest against this Romish innovation; the religious observance of Christmas! If you are going to celebrate one Roman Catholic holy day, why not celebrate all the others ? Such as the Advent, and the Epiphany? If you are going to honor one Catholic saint, Saint Nicholas, why not honor all Catholic saints? 'Oh, consistency, thou art a jewel!' (Dennison).Let's take "Christ" OUT of Christmas! **Truth Magazine, V:3; pp. 1, 4-6 December 1960**