

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About... Special Days

The question is often asked why the churches of Christ, during the Christmas season, don't put up Christmas trees in the building or Nativity scenes outside. The apostle Paul wrote, "One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:5-8). In this entire chapter of Romans, Paul is not discussing areas of doctrine, but areas of opinion (i.e. food and special days). Therefore, if one eats or does not eat, observes a day or does not observe a day, this is a matter of opinion and is between that person and God. Through Paul's instruction in this matter, the church as a whole is not to bind any of his/ her opinions onto other believers who may not celebrate "special days."

Since we cannot bind "special days" on Christians, can Christians observe "special days" privately, as long as he/she does not bind them on others? According to Romans chapter 14, if an individual Christian wants to honor Jesus' birth by special events during the Christmas season, they may do so. Scripture did not bind, as doctrine, that we must celebrate the birth of Christ. Nowhere in scripture did Christians or disciples of Christ celebrate His birth in the New Testament.

This time of year Christians do have an opportunity to preach the whole counsel of God's word. Paul said, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke and exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2). Since God saw fit in Matthew chapters 1-2, Luke chapters 1-2, to include the details of Jesus' birth, we are clearly obeying the Lord's command to "preach the word" when we are teaching correctly from these passages.

We also have an example from the apostle Paul when he reminded the elders of the church in Ephesus how he "did not shrink back from declaring to them the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:20). The account of Jesus' birth is a part of God's word (i.e. counsel to us). So when we teach on this biblical subject, we are doing nothing more than imitating Paul (1 Cor. 11:1).

There is no scriptural reason not to preach Christ's birth in December or any other time of the year. The expression, "in season and out of season" means there is no bad time to preach the word including the birth of Christ. During this time of year non-Christians are also thinking about His birth. It is entirely appropriate for Christians to take advantage of this circumstance. When Paul entered Athens, he took advantage of the situation he found and preached to the people about their worship of other gods (Acts 17:22-31). So just as the apostle Paul used the conditions of their day to proclaim the truths of God, so too must we be willing to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

No Christian today is being told they "must" observe Christmas to be right with God. The elders should not "bind" this day on others by decorating the building for Christmas when some members may not observe this day as a "special day". We recognize Jesus' birth because this event is recorded in the Bible, but this doctrinal truth may be taught any given week during the course of the year. We thank God for bringing His Son into the world to be our Savior. Choosing to, or not to, celebrate Jesus' birth does not make a Christian any better or worse.

Send comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to: info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org