

Sermon Mark S. Aites  
**THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST**  
(Based on Tract by Garland Robinson)

**TEXT: ISA. 7:14**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. On one occasion a group of students was asked about the Christmas holiday: "What is it a time for?"
  - 1) Of the answers: "a time for joy, a time for sportsmanship, because you don't always get everything you want."
  - 2) Aside from the humorous comments, were the traditional comments -- "Jesus' birthday."
2. It is a common belief that prevails that Dec. 25 is the day that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea.
3. The question that arises is, is this supported by scripture?
4. Many people think it strange that churches of Christ do not celebrate the Christmas holiday as a religious holiday (as Jesus' birthday).
5. There are legitimate reasons why we do not; but less you might think we discount the importance of His birth, we teach it strongly.

**DISCUSSION:**

**I. THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH.**

- A. The fundamental truth of Jesus' birth is essential to our faith in Christ.
  1. We believe that the Christ was manifested in this world as a human being.
  2. **1 John 4:2-3** *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:*  
**4:3** *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*
  3. We certainly cannot deny one of the most wonderful events in the history of this world.
- B. The birth of Christ is important because it was not an ordinary birth.
  1. **Isa. 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.*
  2. **Matt. 1:23** *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*
  3. When the angel of God spoke to the Mary, he said unto her, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).*
  4. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream: saying, *Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1:20).*
- C. When Jesus came into this world, He was born of a virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit, making it clear that He was from God.
  1. Unlike any other that has ever lived among men: He was fully man and fully God.
  2. **Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:5.**
- D. The importance of that virgin birth is that it declares the deity of Christ.

1. If we deny this wondrous birth, then we deny that He is the Son of God, or God the Son.
  2. There are abundant scriptures which do teach His deity; and if He was not born of the virgin Mary, then it makes the sacred writers liars, as well as the Lord.
  3. It would make John a liar, for He declared that Jesus came in the flesh (**1 John 1:1-3**).
  4. It would also make Matthew a liar, for he wrote that the birth of Jesus was a fulfillment of **Isa. 7:14. (Matt. 1:23)**.
  5. It would make Luke a liar for telling us that an angel of God announced His birth to the shepherds, that *there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10-14)*.
- E. The truth is that Jesus is Divine; and what makes the virgin birth even more a truly marvelous event, is that Jesus existed even prior to His birth in Bethlehem of Judea (**John 1:1-3,14; Col. 1:16-17**).
- F. It should be obvious by now that by these facts and truths of God's word, we do uphold and treasure the birth of our Lord.
1. We treasure it because by divine design He was sent to save man from his sins (**Matt. 1:21**).
  2. And was sent to be a *propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2)*.

## II. THE FACTS.

- A. First, the Bible does not provide us with a date when Jesus was born.
1. Actually, there is no way for us to arrive at a precise date for this event.
  2. It is very unlikely that it was December 25th, for the angel of the Lord announced His birth to the shepherds while they were in the field at night.
    - 1) They would not have been in the field at night in the winter.
    - 2) We may not realize that it is winter there just as it is here.
    - 3) Cold temperatures in that region are not unknown.
  3. Several scholars believe therefore that Jesus likely was born in the spring.
- B. Most any encyclopedia will give you the background of the Christmas holiday (permit me for a moment to cite some dates and information from extra-biblical sources):
1. Actually, there was no real desire for there to be a date to observe the Lord's birth until the beginning of the 3rd century, in the days of Hippolytus.
  2. Several dates were suggested: Hippolytus "first chose January 2nd, others proposed May 20th, April 18th or 19th, March 25th or 28th." (G.Robinson's Tract-Ency.of Religion) Other dates suggested as well were Jan. 6th, and of course Dec. 25th.
  3. I recognize of course that these things are of man's historical record: --but noting the Encyclopedia Britannica: "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church, and before the 5th century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether on January 6th, March 25th, or Dec. 25th."
  4. "As late as 245 A.D., Origen repudiated the idea of keeping the birthday of Christ, as if he were a King Pharaoh." (Ibid.)
  5. I mention these things to simply point out that the day of observance was clearly a

- decision of man's devising, and not God's.
5. Schaff in his work, *The History of the Christian Church*, informs us: "Christmas was introduced in Antioch about the year 380; in Alexandria, where the feast of Epiphany was celebrated as the nativity of Christ, not till about 430. Chrysostom, who delivered the Christmas homily in Antioch on the 25th of December 386, already calls it, notwithstanding its recent introduction (some ten years before), the fundamental feast, or the root from which all other Christian festivals grow forth."
  6. But perhaps most noted, was the event of 440 A.D. in Rome, when a man known as bishop Juneval desired that the celebration of the Lord's birth coincide with the pagan Roman celebration and worship of the sun.
  7. This date was accepted and made official by the Roman Catholic church in 534 A.D. more than 500 yrs after the Lord's birth.
  8. Again the purpose of noting this, is to point out clearly that the observance of the Lord's birth was of man's design and not God's.
  9. If it had been of God, then we could read of it in scripture.
- C. Actually, as you look at the modern observance of the holiday, there are several things which are questionable.
1. Find in your Bibles how many wise men there were.
    - 1) There is not a number specified.
    - 2) There are three gifts mentioned (**Matt. 2:11**), but no mention of the number of those who presented these gifts.
  2. The common thought also is that the wise men came to see the infant Jesus on the night he was born.
    - 1) If you carefully study **Matt. 2:11**, you will observe that the wise men came to the house.
    - 2) It would seem to convey that by the time they saw the child Joseph and Mary were already in a house.
  3. G. Robinson made the observation: that Herod tried to have all the children 2 yrs and under killed - meaning that by the time the wise men came, Jesus may have been a year or two old.
- D. But perhaps most notable, we find no biblical instruction or example of those who celebrated the birth of Christ.
1. We know that the early church continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine (**Acts 2:42**).
  2. We also know that these men were being divinely guided in what they were doing (**John 14:26; 16:13**).
  3. Of the days that they set forth we are to honor, is none save the first day of every week -- we have this by example (**Acts 20:7**).
- E. We should also observe that the word Christmas is not in the Bible.
1. The word is derived from two words: *Christ* and *Mass*.
  2. G. Robinson notes: "The so-called Mass was a gathering of disciples at which certain rituals were performed being mixed with paganism and Judaism. The annual mass which celebrated the birthday of Christ came to be known as "Christmas Mass," or "Mass of Christ," or as we call it, "ChristMas."
  3. This word is not therefore of divine origin.

- F. It also is important to note Paul's statement in **Gal. 4:10-11**: *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*  
**4:11** *I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.*
1. Paul was dealing with those who were trying to bring back Judaism to replace Christianity
  2. Part of that was the observance of special religious observances common to the Old Testament (Covenant).
  3. Paul is indicating to the churches of Galatia that there should not be any observance of holy days.
- F. Certainly we know from example that the early church worshipped on the first day of every week, and a part of that worship was to commemorate the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
1. They did so by partaking of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week.
  2. There is a Greek term in **Acts 20:7** in the distributive case which Thayer states is indicative of every first day of the week.
  3. It conveys that it was the practice of the early church to partake of the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day.
- G. But perhaps the most important point I could make on this is based on **Col. 3:17**: *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*
1. Break down the passage:
    - 1) *And whatsoever ye do* - that covers everything.
    - 2) *In word or deed* - covers everything in doctrine and practice.
    - 3) *Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*- means by the authority of Christ.
  2. The Lord only gives His approval to those things done according to His will.
  3. Out of respect for the silence of scripture on the subject of Christmas, and the observance of the Lord's birth, we therefore teach and practice only those things which He has authorized and approved -- and the observance of such is not mandated by God.
- H. If the celebration of Christ's birth were required of God, it stands to reason that the apostles would have instructed us of this, or had proven it by example.

### **III. THE FOCUS.**

- A. There is a concern that needs to be expressed:
1. There are those, who aware of the truth of Christ's birth, swing the proverbial pendulum to the extreme.
  2. They go so far as to ignore even the secular observance of the holiday.
- B. We have already noted that there is no authority or example for observing the birth of Jesus, but one can observe national holidays without religious significance.
1. We observe the 4th of July without religious significance; we observe New Year's Day without significance.
  2. I can find nothing in Scripture that would prevent a secular observance of giving gifts, or having a pine tree in your home.
  3. Even in my own family, we give gifts, we have a tree, we give and exchange cards. We even enjoy the various parties in the holiday season.

4. But according to scripture, we don't observe the Christmas holiday as a religious holiday.
- C. While the observance of the Lord's birthday is not scriptural, and absent of authority, the matter of what you do on that day in a secular sense is to your own judgment.
1. I am mindful of some who have crossed my way through the years who tried to explain that the Christmas tree is forbidden in Scripture.
  2. They are referring to a passage in the book of Jeremiah:  
**Jer. 10:2-5** *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.*  
**10:3** *For 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.*  
**10:4** *They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.*  
**10:5** *They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be born, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.*
  3. Does it sound familiar? Well ask the question, why would God put a prophesy in the Old Testament 600 yrs before Christ concerning X-mas trees.
  4. The practice of cutting trees for the holiday observance came from Germany some 200 yrs ago.
  5. Jeremiah was speaking of the trees for which they cut, carved, and were decorating for worship.
  6. In **Jer. 10** the prophet is speaking out against the idolatry of his day.
  7. Some have said that the application can be made that putting up a tree today is a vain custom, but let it be clear that it is a matter of human judgment and not doctrine.
- D. I have known some who totally ignore the holiday even in secular observance.
1. They say that to do so would violate their conscience.
  2. Paul's instruction of **Rom. 14** clearly reminds us that we can not force someone to do that which violates his conscience.
  3. **Rom. 14:5** *One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*
  4. **Rom. 14:23** *...whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*
- E. As we consider our focus in this holiday season, I want you to focus on the attitude that generally prevails.
1. Not the one of greed and avarice.
  2. Not like the poor employee mentioned on the news a couple of years back, whose store received a shipment of 48 tickle me Elmos, who was stampeded and had to be treated at a hospital for bruises.
  3. It is amazing the lengths that people will go to, to make sure that they obtain the material possessions they desire.
- F. What needs to be captivated is the spirit of peace and good will toward men.
1. While we may not observe the Christmas holiday religiously, we none the less can see the beauty of the kind spirit.
  2. This is a spirit that should prevail among the children of God throughout the year.
  3. **Rom. 12:10** *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor*

*preferring one another.*

4. **Eph. 4:32** *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*
- F. And perhaps as well, the desire to give to others.
  1. **Acts 20:35** *I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*
  2. It has often been said, that a person who gives feels better even than the recipient because it comes from the heart.
  3. The apostle Paul spoke well of the Macedonian brethren and commended them because *they first gave of themselves (2 Cor. 8:5).*
  4. It shows the depth of their giving and the beauty of their hearts.

## CONCLUSION:

1. Christians may be maligned for not observing the "Judeo-Christian Calendar," as it has been called.
2. We may be criticized for not observing Dec. 25th as Christ's birthday, but the spirit that should prevail is found, not on one day, but in our hearts every day of the year.
3. In this holiday season, as it should be all year long, I encourage you to remember those who are less fortunate than you.
4. **Gal. 6:10** *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*
5. I encourage you also to spend time with your family, and pay honor and thanks where they are due.
6. But most of all, if **you** truly honor Christ, and are thankful for Christ's birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection, then you will live in obedience to His will, as He taught you to live.
7. It seems somewhat ironic that people will sing of His birth, and celebrate the occasion, and yet live contrary to His will.
8. **Luke 6:46** *"And why call ye me Lord...";* **John 14:15.**
9. Contrary to what many may think, we of the Lord's church do honor Christ's birth, and hold it in such high significance that we confess His deity, and do whatever Christ asks of us.
10. **John 8:31** *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.*
11. Remember that the first thing that Paul said the Macedonians did was give of themselves.
12. If you really want to lift your praises to the Most High King, and do something pleasing in His sight, then begin by giving yourself to Him.
13. PLAN OF SALVATION