

# Misaimings

“Who concerning the truth have misaimed”—2 Tim. 2:18

## Misaiming concerning the Importance of Christmas

**Misaiming:** “Sometimes it’s hard to be a Christian at Christmas. Okay, it’s not that hard. After all, we do it every year. Still, it seems harder than it ought to be. Why does a holiday that is supposed to put the focus on faith often seem tinged with doubt? Why does a celebration of peace on earth seem to bring with it so much anxiety and fear? How can we somehow simultaneously worry both that Christmas has become overblown and that it is being canceled? Where are you, Christmas? Why can’t I find you?” (Timothy Larsen, “No One Took Christ out of Christmas” *Christianity Today*, vol. 65, no. 9, Dec. 2021, p. 58).

**Truth:** The author’s central argument—concerning whether Christians should be ashamed of celebrating a holiday that has become so commercialized and culturalized that it omits any true recognition of Christ and the “Virgin Birth”—is misplaced since the source of the holiday is Christless to begin with. The incarnation of Christ, one of the greatest events in human history, in which the infinite God was begotten in a human virgin to produce a mingling of the divine nature with the human nature without producing a third nature, a person who was completely God yet fully man—Jesus, Jehovah the Savior (Matt. 1:18-21; Luke 1:35)—certainly should be recognized for what it brought forth and its implications that resulted in, ultimately, the salvation of mankind through the person and work of Christ (John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 Pet. 1:3). However, nowhere in the divine record does it command us as Christians to celebrate the birth of Christ. In fact, the Lord Himself only commanded us to remember His death (Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26) until He returns. Thus, Larsen is intuitively correct in addressing the apparent shame that Christians may face in celebrating the birth of Jesus, but he misses the intrinsic reason why. The origin of Christmas and its selected date, December 25,

come from the pagan holiday *Saturnalia*, in which pagans worshipped the sun “god” with a festival that coincided with the lengthening of days after the winter solstice. The December 25<sup>th</sup> date, of course, conflicts with the biblical account of the Lord’s birth and any of the nativity scenes so ubiquitously displayed in places of worship; given the cold evenings in Bethlehem at that time of year, the shepherds would not have been “spending their nights in the fields,” “keeping watch over their flocks by night,” as recorded in Luke 2:8. And certainly,

while the cultural and commercial phenomenon that is Christmas may have originally been related to Christ, the current practice of society, with its many Christless elements, elements that have nothing to do with the birth of Christ (i.e., trees, icons, gifts, etc.), does cause the seeking Christians to question the dichotomy between the genuine Christian

faith and the outward secular holiday that Christmas has become.

For sure, the superficiality and spectacle of Christmas misleads believers and obscures the true significance of the incarnation, which includes the following three aspects of the foundation of the Christian faith. (1) The infinite God was brought into the finite man (1 Tim. 3:16). What a wonder and a mystery that the infinite divine being of God was embodied in human flesh, yet without sin (Rom. 8:3)! (2) God is expressed in humanity. Although there were proper and moral men in existence on the earth prior to the incarnation of Christ, it was not until the incarnation that God was expressed in humanity (i.e., Luke 2:49-52, where we see that even as such a young child, Christ was subject to His parents while speaking words beyond human wisdom). (3) The incarnation was necessary for the accomplishment of judicial redemption. The God-man was foreordained by the determined counsel of God to accomplish redemption as the landmark of the ages (Acts 2:23); Christ’s birth was indeed an important step taken by the Divine Trinity to carry out His plan among mankind. Thus, the real question today is not “Christmas,

*The superficiality  
and spectacle of Christmas  
misleads believers  
and obscures  
the true significance  
of the incarnation.*

where can I find you?” but “Christ, where can I find You?” Because of His incarnation and subsequent death and resurrection, this Christ is near and available to all humanity—not just on Christmas but, actually, whenever a believer speaks the gospel to an unbeliever and that one receives the glad tidings; in that moment Christ is, yet again, born in a human being. This is the answer,

then, that the author seeks—Christ is, indeed, not found and never was found in a pagan holiday; rather, He is found in the seeds of faith that we Christians have within us, that which we can, in our daily lives, sow into the hearts of those in our personal universe.

by the Editors

### The Pagan Festival of Christmas

The festivals of Rome are innumerable; but five of the most important may be singled out for elucidation—viz., Christmas-day, Lady-day, Easter, the Nativity of St. John, and the Feast of the Assumption. Each and all of these can be proved to be Babylonian. And first, as to the festival in honour of the birth of Christ, or Christmas. How comes it that that festival was connected with the 25<sup>th</sup> of December? There is not a word in the Scriptures about the precise day of His birth, or the time of the year when He was born. What is recorded there, implies that at what time soever His birth took place, it *could* not have been on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. At the time that the angel announced His birth to the shepherds of Bethlehem, they were feeding their flocks by night in the open fields. Now, no doubt, the climate of Palestine is not so severe as the climate of this country; but even there, though the heat of the day be considerable, the cold of the night, from December to February, is very piercing, and it was *not* the custom for the shepherds of Judea to watch their flocks in the open fields *later* than about the end of October. It is in the last degree incredible, then, that the birth of Christ could have taken place at the end of December. There is great unanimity among commentators on this point. Besides Barnes, Doddridge, Lightfoot, Joseph Scaliger, and Jennings, in his “Jewish Antiquities,” who are all of opinion that December 25<sup>th</sup> could not be the right time of our Lord’s nativity... Indeed, it is admitted by the most learned and candid writers of all parties that the day of our Lord’s birth cannot be determined, and that *within the Christian Church* no such festival as Christmas was ever heard of *till the third* century, and that not till the *fourth* century was far advanced did it gain much observance. How, then, did the Romish Church fix on December the 25<sup>th</sup> as Christmas-day? Why, thus: Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era itself, a festival was celebrated among the *heathen*, at that precise time of the year, in honour of the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven; and it may fairly be presumed that, in order to conciliate the heathen, and to swell the number of the nominal adherents of Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Church, giving it only the name of Christ. This tendency on the part of Christians to meet Paganism half-way was very early developed; and we find Tertullian, even in his day, about the year 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect, and contrasting it with the strict fidelity of the Pagans to their own superstition. “By us,” says he,

who are strangers to Sabbaths, and new moons, and festivals, once acceptable to God, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the *Brumalia*, and Matronalia, are now frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, new year’s day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar; oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to *their* religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians.

Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts, the apostacy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition. That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival, is beyond all doubt.

From *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop, pp. 130-133