



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

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**“Is there a right way to celebrate Christmas?”**



**The synopsis of a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on December 19th, 2004.**

The birth of Christ has not been recorded with the chronological detail that we find in the record of the Saviour's death. The month, week, day and hour of that sacred event are given in detail. No

such detail is given us of His birth.

To me that suggests very plainly that it is not the will of God that we seek to mark that event and celebrate it annually, on a specific date decreed by men.

There is no record in the New Testament of the early church celebrating His birth but there is of its marking the death and resurrection of the Saviour.

The celebrations which will take place on December 25th and the days before that date have no basis whatever in Holy Scripture. In fact, the whole essence of these celebrations will fly in the face of what the Bible does tell us about the birth of Christ. Most Christians know that to be true and incontestable.

The modern “Christmas celebration” is nothing less than a resurgence of the ancient, pagan, mid-winter feast with a veneer of pseudo-Christianity stuck over it. Year by year, the veneer becomes thinner and more transparent!

Many Christians will also be aware that Christ was born in the late Summer or early Autumn and not in the dead of winter. This conclusion may be drawn from a close study of the information given us about the conception of John the Baptist, whose birth preceded that of Christ by six months. (See Luke 1: 5, 8, 23-34 &26.)

All who love the Lord must know that the “spirit of Christmas” is quite contrary to the teaching and life of the Son of God. Yet, despite this, many persist in countenancing it and identifying themselves with it to some degree or other. Some would even speak of putting “Christ back into Christmas.” You cannot put Christ back into that of which He never was a part!

To seek to put God's seal upon that which has not God's approval is a most dangerous path to tread. It is akin to the falsifying of the authenticity of their evil deceits which false prophets engage in when they say: “Thus saith the Lord” about that which is the very opposite to His Word.

To speak of a “right way to celebrate Christmas” is to propound a deceit and a falsehood. There is no right way to tell a lie. There is no right way to engage in a deceit. There is no right way to promote a myth and an invention as part of the truth of Christ. what to do?? What should the people of God do at this season of the year?

**I. WE SHOULD CLEARLY DECLARE THE TRUE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S COMING**



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That purpose was succinctly stated by Paul. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," 1 Timothy 1: 15.

**1. There is a need to remind the world that it is lost in sin.** How can we as Christians associate with the false view of the coming of Christ which the world rejoices in at this season? devoted The world is "devoted" to sin. It does not see its sin. It does not realise that its notions of worshipping God are sin! We aid it in its self-deception when we endorse in any way the fleshly activities of 'Christmas'. Man's total depravity reaches even to the "good" things he seeks to engage in. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," Isaiah 64:6. Paul, religious Jew that he was, was a sinner in need of salvation, even when he was striving to fulfil the strict obligations of a Pharisee's code. It was all as filthy rags in God's eyes. So too are the many attempts at piety intermingled with the excesses of the flesh, one sees as common at this season.

**2. The world is in need of salvation.** None more so than the "religious revellers" whose voices fill the air.

The world cannot save itself. Hence the intervention of Christ. Mankind is as the lost sheep. It cannot find its way home. The sheep is not like the dog or the cat which may find its way home, despite being deliberately dumped many miles from it. The sheep will remain lost. If men could find their own way to heaven there would have been no need for the Saviour to come seeking sinners.

There is a great need for us to emphasise this doctrine at this time of the year, when men are filled with that self-righteous spirit which manifests itself in special church services, communions and open-air carol services — all of which have attenders making their one and only annual visit to a place of worship! Rather than being seen to have any part in or conformity to such blasphemous folly let us challenge this deception with the truth of the gospel.

**3. We cannot be faithful to Christ's message without withdrawing from and denouncing the vain celebrations of Christmas.** Most of the pious singers of carols will be seen at the pub or the dance or the party engaging in the spirit of pagan debauchery commonly seen at this season. This is man's religion. It is the duty of the Christian to seek by every lawful means to disillusion those duped by such notions. We must warn them plainly. Engaging in practices which may differ only in degree from the ungodly's activities is not the way to persuade people of the errors which they espouse, but rather it serves only to confirm them in their sin.

### II. LET US URGE UPON MEN THAT RECEPTION OF WHICH CHRIST IS WORTHY

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name," John 1: 10-12.

**1. Nothing demonstrates mankind's ignorance of the Saviour more clearly than Christmas celebration.**



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The “Christ” of Christmas is a myth and is therefore welcomed by men. The Christ of the Bible is still despised and rejected. As Christians we must combat such self-deception. It was what the Saviour frequently engaged in and brought upon His head the wrath of men as a result. In His day, men were just as prone to worship a God of their own conception. He set Himself to correct them and put them right. “He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition,” Mark 7:6-9. From His very first recorded sermon in Luke’s gospel (4:16-30), the Saviour challenged the foolish notions of men and suffered for it.

**Man is determined to reject the true Christ.** The Jew was well informed about the Messiah yet he rejected Him. The Jew is termed Christ’s “own” and yet he did not receive Him. How determined is man in his opposition to God and His truth! Man’s religious enthusiasm over Christmas is but part of his ongoing rejection of the truth of God. We must not be seen to assist such rebellion but urge upon men the reception of the true Christ.

**Men ought to believe Christ and receive Him.** That is the celebration that all men should engage in. The rewards of such action are great indeed. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,” John 1:12. Faith in Christ results in God granting us the right, the authority to be called His sons. Where there is a forsaking of sin and a receiving of Christ there is assurance of our sonship. This is the gift that men should give full consideration to today.

### III. LET US UNASHAMEDLY DISASSOCIATE OURSELVES FROM THE EXCESSES OF THIS SEASON

Unconverted men, despite all the references to Christ and His coming heard at this time, do not seek to worship Christ but rather seek the destruction of all that is of Christ. The claim of the world is that of wicked Herod when he spoke to the wise men. “Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also,” Matthew 2:8. But being warned of God, the wise men stayed away from Herod, for his profession was but a cover for an evil plan of murder and destruction. The devil planned to use Herod as he later used Judas — to bring about the death of Christ. But God warned the wise men to have no part in Herod’s wicked scheme. “And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way,” Matthew 2:12. Herod planned the death of Christ. That killer spirit is still abroad today. Indeed, it is never more active than at “Christmas” time!

We must be like those wise men and stay clear of the false claims of the Christmas revelers and walk a path separate from their evil schemes.

Separation for the Christian is not just a withdrawing from the efforts of ecumenists to unite apostate Protestantism with Roman Catholicism. No, we are commanded to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,” Ephesians 5:11.



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The paganism of “Christmas” is much older than the modern ecumenical movement and we are required still to remove ourselves from all forms of pagan rituals and deceits as did Christians in earlier ages.

Listen to these words of Peter and consider what he has to say, for I feel his counsel is becoming ever more relevant for us today. “That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you,” 1 Peter 4:3-4.

If ever there was a description of the modern “Christmas” festival, it is found in these words of Peter as he describes a heathen feast in his day. It is a six-fold description and does indeed encapsulate all that the number 6 represents in Holy Scripture. Man was created on the sixth day. He has ever been linked with that number. The most wicked man that will ever draw breath will be the Antichrist and of him God says: “Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six,” Revelation 13:18.

The six-fold description of man’s depraved indulgences, given us by Peter, is aptly suited to the festivities of today. From such we must utterly withdraw ourselves. Peter says that we are not to “run” with them. The word suggests enthusiastic involvement. As Christians we have spent enough of our life in such activities during the days of our unbelief. Now we must depart from such. Those who do take a stand against the deception of “Christmas” will be counted “strange” and will be evil spoken of. That will come as no surprise to the opponents of the heathen activities of this time of the year. They will be well acquainted with the mocking and sneering, not just of the world, but of Christians who must surely know better.

However, such is the reproach that must be borne. Our nation, having been under the gospel plough for centuries and made to yield much fruit from the sowing of the good seed, is now, through apostasy and unbelief, returning to a state of nature. The briars and the brambles and the weeds of paganism are beginning to flourish again. I believe that, in the close of this age, believers will find themselves living and witnessing in circumstances similar to those of first-century Christians.

It is time, therefore, for us to stand where those dear witnesses for Christ stood and withdraw from the growing paganism that is developing before our eyes. Christian, “Christmas” is the plainest and most obvious evidence of that emerging paganism.

Where do you stand in relation to it?