



December 25, 2005

## *Signs Of The Times*

New Testament Christians do not celebrate “Christmas” as a religious holiday and some do not celebrate it at all, or may alter the time to exchange gifts with family. While we do not endorse the idea of a religious holiday that cannot be supported in the scriptures, it is sad to see even the denominational world slipping from any commitment to God. It used to be that the two days in the year that you could count on church attendance to go up would be Christmas and Easter. I used to have a cartoon that showed a church building with a sign outside that stated, “The faithful meet here every Christmas and Easter.” You could also count on the fact that almost every store would be closed on these days as well. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, the Dayton Daily News ran a story from the Associated Press of a number of “mega” churches that were not holding services on Christmas day. In the Dayton area this reportedly caused a stir among those who are religious. It does not seem that anything like this has been done before. There are so many things wrong here that it would take more than this short article to sort them all out.

In the article the thinking that led to this decision was noted as feeding into the “consumer mentality”, giving people what they want rather than following doctrine. Convenience was cited in the article as part of this thinking. The end result being the convenience of religion, and non interference with what we want. While this is being hyped by the media, due to the holiday, this has been a practice by some groups for quite a while. Over the years it has been argued that since the Jews began their day at sunset, then it is reasonable to meet on Saturday evening, thus meeting the requirement for gathering on the Lord’s Day. The problem with this is that we do not go by Jewish time, even if there is a biblical basis for it. The exception to this seems to have been Christmas, the most holy day of the year for many. Religious organizations have not only strayed from the doctrine of the New Testament, but they have done exactly what the scriptures tell us not to; putting ourselves before God. Let’s take a look at what the scriptures do say about assembling.

The early Christians met on the first day of the week (**Acts 20.7**). Paul the apostle gave instructions to the Corinthians to lay by in store, or give, on the first day of the week (**1 Cor 16.1-2**). We also have detailed instructions on observing the Lord’s Supper, or communion, on the first day of the week (**Acts 20.7, 1 Cor 11.23-29**). This is in the context of telling the Corinthians how to conduct themselves when they assemble and is continued through the next several chapters. By history, inference and example we conclude that these activities occurred on the first day of the week, Sunday. The writer of Hebrews cautions us about not neglecting assembling with the saints (**Heb 10.24-25**).

An argument is made that since the “holiday” falls on Sunday, that this should be a day for families to be together. What better way for families to be together than to assemble in worship to God. There is a problem here as well. By setting aside the instructions of God we have another example of doing what we want rather than what God instructs. Family is important and God expects us to love and care for one another, but we must not put family ahead of God and faithful service to the Lord. Christ stated, “**He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.**” (**Matt 10.37**). Family involvement and obligations take most of our time, and this is right, but God must come before and over all these if we truly love Him. As Christians our family life will revolve around our commitment to God, not the other way around. This is reflected in that article as an extension of “individualism” the me first attitude. Christ stated, “**...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.**” (**Matt 16.24**). Being faithful to God means that we will put our wants and wishes aside when necessary to do that which is right. This is regarded as an archaic attitude and is cited as a reason why “conservative” religious organizations are not experiencing the growth that others do. The good thing about this decision is that there are many who voiced disapproval. Now if they will read their Bibles and question other decisions and practices they may find that they need to make some changes in their life. Sunday is a family day. We will spend it with God’s family.

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