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CHRISTMAS: To Celebrate or Not Celebrate

Written by Moriel Administrator (/component/k2/itemlist/user/42-moriel-administrator.html)

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Recently I received two emails from good believing friends concerning non observance of Christmas based on the contents of two articles included below by Alan Franklin and Kevin Kleint. This is my considered response.

Blessings.

I have a very similar attitude as Alan & Pat Franklin towards Christmas. I do not celebrate it as such, recognizing that it's commercial and aspects (largely borrowed from Pagan influences, such as 'mistletoe') have usurped the centrality of the Nativity. It is also a false method of bringing children happiness. As Moishe Rosen, founder of 'Jews For Jesus' stated: "Sana Clause (father Christmas) is a communist who dresses in red and only gives away things that other people pay for and corrupts children into thinking happiness comes primarily from material things.

Now I can indeed respect the legacy of the actual historical figure St. Nicholas who was pastor of the church of Ephesus during the final pagan persecution of the church in the 5th century when he was imprisoned for his faith in Christ. By historical reputation, he was known for his charity to the poor, apparently for evangelizing seamen (Ephesus was still a port city at that time), and for his love of children. These are Christian virtues any of us should espouse and I would have no issues with the real St. Nicholas. Indeed, I can admire the Christ-likeness of such Christians who demonstrate their faith through evangelism and charity to the poor and who demonstrate their faithfulness to Christ by remaining loyal to Him under conditions of persecution and imprisonment as the price for their faith. Who could have any problem with the true St. Nicholas (from what relatively little we actually know of him). The problem that I have is that Santa Clause with his flying reindeer (borrowed most likely from Nordic folk mythology), bears little or no resemblance to the real historical St. Nicholas. It is a distortion of him that the actual St. Nicholas (an ethnic Greek) would not have even recognized. In such countries as Holland, moreover, at least a distinction is made between St. Nicholas whose embellished legacy as 'gift giver to children' is celebrated on the 14th of December (arriving with his companion 'Black Pete' not by sleigh but by steamboat) distinct from Santa

Clause on the 25th of December in the Latin & Protestant churches of the West and the 6th or 7th of January as celebrated by the Byzantine churches of the East. The January Christmas of the Eastern churches, known as 'Epiphany' in the liturgical calendar of the West, is where the cultural tradition of gift giving to children was originally seen as commemorating the Magi bearing gifts to the infant Jesus symbolic of His Kingship (Gold), His High Priesthood (Frankincense), and death & Resurrection (myrrh). But it culturally evolved and is still evolving (the famous red suit of Santa Clause replaced the original gold one when the Coca Cola company launched a massive advertising campaign in the early 20th century to have Santa Clause wear the colors of the Coca Cola brand). It is all fake.

There are, however, other reasons I personally do not like Christmas. I had a cousin die in the USA several months ago. He was a Certified Public Accountant (Chartered Accountant) in the New Jersey suburbs of New York City, and he was one of those relatives of whom I was quite fond but unfortunately did not get to see much of as I mainly live and work abroad. What is unusual was not only that he died youngish, but that he was a paternal cousin married to my first cousin maternally. I and my siblings are/ were related to both my cousin, who very sadly snuffed it, and to his widow. As a result, this holiday season I now face the unhappy task of calling for "the Holidays" to offer solace and further condolences to his widow (who is also my cousin). Christmas not only compounds the loneliness and compounds the emotional effects of bereavement on families recently bereft of loved ones such as the widow spending her first 'Christmas' alone in many year, but Christmas becomes an emotional cruelty perpetrated in the name of Christianity. This is to say nothing of the burden of social inferiority the materialistic event places on poor and disadvantaged children and to seriously ill children who must spend Christmas hospitalized (given our own children's mission at Moriel for our Garbage dump children in the Philippines where poverty and Dengue fever are rife, it is a reality of which we are acutely aware). Such things make a mockery of the scriptural meaning of the Nativity, which is a God-given message of hope in and through the coming of Christ/ Messiah. Arguably, if Christmas was simply observed as a commemoration of the Nativity (the historical problem that we do not know for certain even the year, much less the day when Jesus was born notwithstanding), and if it had shed its pagan accoutrements, these objections might not feature in my adverse disposition towards Christmas to make a theological issue of it. But the social and cultural reality is that Christmas is neither simply nor even mainly about the Nativity. On the contrary, Christmas is mostly about worldly things and what is in actual essence mammon worship, that are in diametric adversity to any authentically scriptural perspective of the birth of Jesus. Yet the issue is more complex than this.

However extraneous to "Christmas" the Nativity Narratives are, two huge chunks of two of the four Gospels, they are vital to understanding the prophetic content for Revelation chapter 12 etc. And these two narratives inclusive of the genealogies are of doctrinal importance in everything from the Messianic apologetics required for the evangelization of Jews, to the refutation of liberal higher criticism in academic theology concerning the synoptic issue and source critical issues. They form the hermeneutical basis eschatologically for furnishing us the typological paradigm for the end times prophetic interpretation of Revelation chapter 12, which is a quintessential New Testament example of midrashic pesher. An understanding of the Nativity is absolutely essential in understanding The Return of Christ. If we do not

grasp the doctrinal theology of His first coming, we shall not be prepared for His Second Coming.

It would furthermore serve us all well as believers to be mindful of the fact that the current legal "kulturkampf" being waged against Christmas in school districts, shopping precincts and the like by anti Judeo-Christian atheist groups, by the damnable ACLU, and by left wing politicians, judges and bureaucrats desiring 'political correctness' by not offending Moslems with the public display of Judeo-Christian festive emblems is not in reality a war on Christmas, but a war on Christianity by the proponents of atheism and Islamic Sharia. In the USA we presently exist in a climate where enemies of the constitution, who are engaged in a war to destroy the First and Fourth Amendments, are also hell-bent (and they are literally bending towards hell as their probable destination) on redefining the constitutional 'Freedom of Religion' to mean "Freedom from Religion". Frequently, these are the same activists who disguise their anti-Semitism with the camouflage of anti-Zionism, although in a number of cases their ranks include both leftist Jews and "liberation theology" so-called Christians, not realizing that the Saudi Wahabist funded organizations and Olenskyists pushing these agendas in actuality view them as Lenin's proverbial "useful idiots" to be disposed of later.

This contemporary reality places someone like me in a very complicated situation. On one hand I do not like Christmas because of the aforementioned reasons. Simultaneously however I find myself in a situation where references to Christmas trees (of pagan origin) are being relabeled as 'Holiday Trees', and "Happy Christmas" is being called 'Seasons Greetings' because the Islamic and radical atheistic enemies of Christ want to purge not the "mas" but rather the "Christ" from public proclamation. Often the agenda-driven activists who are the legal front-men for this crusade will exhibit no such objections to Islamic feasts such as Ramadan or Hindu Divali and will most certainly never show any concern that LGBT pride days being publicly exhibited offend the beliefs of Christians and practicing Jews. So by objecting to this campaign against Christmas because it is in fact rather a thinly disguised popular campaign against Christ, I am in the conundrum of either defending a quasi-religious holiday I do not actually believe in or celebrate, or caving in to the forces of atheistic secularism propelled by its Darwinist ideology and incipient Islamic sharia restricting Christian observances as is done in Islamic countries under sharia which is what fundamentalist Islam is demanding and increasingly getting courtesy of the political cowards and hypocrites of the left. Defending something we believe in is straightforward; defending something we don't truly believe in because its opponents are not about opposing Christmas but in reality opposing Christ makes the debacle much more complex. For me, and others like me, it is a convoluted no-win/lose-lose dilemma. Only the devil could orchestrate such a mess.

Not least of all is the consideration of evangelism. In utterly post-Christian/Neo-pagan Great Britain, many unsaved people will only attend church for cultural reasons. These are either rites of passage such as a wedding, a baby dedication or a funeral, or one of several holidays or special Sundays such as Christmas, Easter, Mothering Sunday (British Mother's Day), or Remembrance Sunday (British Memorial Day honoring the war dead). Even in the USA where Easter church attendance is often nothing more than a stupid fashion show where after church people parade up and down in the "Easter Parade" showing off their Spring outfits

while before church children devour chocolate eggs from baskets left by a mythical 'Easter Bunny' (again, of pagan origin).. What any of this has to do with the resurrection of Jesus, I have no idea. To begin with all four gospels and 1 Corinthians make it clear that Jesus was crucified Erev Hag, not on Good Friday and that He arose Yom Rishon of Hag Matzot on the Hebrew feast of First Fruits, and not on Easter Sunday.

We use Jewish holydays to evangelize Jews, often showing Yeshua as the Messianic fulfillment of Yom Kippur and Pesach (Passover). We also thusly use Jewish holydays not prescribed in Torah in Leviticus 23 & 24 such as Chanukka and Purim.

Likewise, these rites of passage such as weddings, baby dedications, and funerals can likewise be used evangelistically to present the gospel to unsaved Jews and non Jews alike. The same is true for Christmas. For purely cultural reasons unsaved people may come to a carol service who would never otherwise set foot in a church. Christmas, despite its worldly trappings, can be turned around and used by The Lord to reach the lost. As much as we may dislike Christmas for a valid variety of reasons, I cannot object to using it as an opportunity to present the Gospel and for purely evangelistic considerations I have done so myself, whose souls on their way to hell will walk through the doors of a church for a wedding or a Carol Service or to remember their family war dead, and I know of no scriptural reason not to capitalize on it for the purpose of presenting the Gospel; indeed there may be no other time that they are going to hear it.

Once more, despite my rather sharp anti-Christmas convictions, there is an opposite side of the coin that I cannot reasonably ignore. Thus I take refuge in Colossians 2:16-19 (<https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Col%202.16-19>) and Romans 14: 4-5 (<https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2014.%204-5>); it is a matter of individual conviction before The Lord not to be judged.

There is some religious website denouncing me as a "false prophet" not because I celebrate Christmas (I do not), but rather because I refuse to condemn churches and Christians who do!

The remarks of Keven Kleint however are less serious exegetically and therefore warrant far less attention. I found this true of his material generally (his attempted explanation of "legalism" negates to define legalism in contrast to Nomianism and anti-Nomianism).

Mr. Kleint seems to be symptomatic of the pseudo scholarship that permeates most (but not all) of the contemporary Messianic Movement in departure from the more serious caliber of Messianic scholarship pioneered by Alfred Edersheim and David Barren and that continued with Dr. Louis Goldberg and Rachmiel Fryland and on to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Dr. Richard Robinson, and Dr. Michael Rydelnik today.

Mr. Kleint totally misses the pivotal passage of Romans 14 with regard to the New Testament issue of festal observance and the Pauline theology concerning it. His treatment of Galatians is flagrantly flawed. Galatians chapter 3 directly refers back to Acts 15 account of the Jerusalem Council. The apostolic

prescription of this council delivered by James (Yakov) under the direct instruction of The Holy Spirit specified four required elements of Torah observance (which are derived from the Noahide covenant in the opinion of many conservative Evangelical theologians) that are compulsory for non-Jews. Festal observance is simply and plainly not one of them.

Mr. Kleint's assertions are therefore implausible. The Sarah & Hagar pesher interpretation of Galatians 4 moreover is not likely something that would have been comprehensible to newly saved pagans. Mr. Kleint's blatant lack of understanding of the Sitz im Leben of Galatia is repeated in his abject assumptions surrounding the church in Colossae & Laodicea.

His eisegetical treatment of the epistle to the Colossians is unsupportable. The church there had a mixture of Jewish and non Jewish believers (Col. 3:11 (<https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Col.%203.11>)) and his fanciful conclusion that Col. 2:16-19 (<https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/nasb95/Col.%202.16-19>) applies only to pagan authorities judging non Jews in the church for observing Hebrew feasts is devoid of any contextual validation or exegetical substance. In fact, unlike in Corinth, the internal evidence of both Galatians and Colossians appears to strongly indicate that the non Jews were not pagans but Gentile "God Fearers" who had a belief in The God of Israel and knowledge of the scriptures from the Septuagint.

Mr. Kleint also omits any mention of the fact that temple observance by the Apostles etc. took place prior to 70 AD while there was a temple standing before Talmudic Judaism totally usurped Mosaic Judaism. He omits Paul's festal theology as demonstrated in his paschal exposition in 1 Corinthians chapter. 5 & 11 which show that Paul held to a Messianic fulfillment of the Holydays as does the Epistle to Hebrews concerning Yom Kippur.

Most seriously lacking in his polemic is his categorical failure to note or address the fact that Yeshua Himself observed holidays not prescribed in Torah in both John 10 where Jesus observed Chanukka and Simcha Torah in John chapter 8 after the Simcha Beit Ha Shoyva fulfillment in John chapter 7 to say nothing of the fact that Old Testament Jews invented and celebrated Purim. For sure, because of the Book of Daniel and the divine intervention in the escapades of Mordechai & Esther, these holidays were not without spiritual meaning, but they were not included in the festal calendar of Leviticus and God never decreed their observance. While seeking to buttress his position on the fact that Christmas and Easter are not in scripture, he ignores the fact that Israel, the Jews and Jesus Himself did so.

Mr. Kleint just cannot be taken seriously. His conclusions are not scripturally justified and his mishandling of scriptural texts does not lend itself to credibility.

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