

Are You Doing God's Will Part 6 A Family Doing God's Will Pause 2 Christ's Birth Celebration

“1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” (Luke 2:1-8 KJV)

The Word of God tells us to show the Lord's death till he comes, ***“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.” (1 Corinthians 11:26 KJV)*** There is no clear command from the Lord or His Word that instructs us to celebrate His birth. Christ, the apostles, and the early fathers of the church did not celebrate His birth.

Why do we celebrate Christ's Birth? The Word of God has many Scriptures that speak about His birth. It is good to speak about his birth, and to say that He came in the flesh, conceived by a woman, born in the flesh under the law, ***“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” (Galatians 4:4 KJV)*** Christ, the Savior of the World was born as a man; He is God and He is also man. Some don't believe that Jesus is a man, therefore to show from the Scriptures that He is born as a man, in the flesh, is a worthy thing. John in his letter declared the fact that Jesus is man, ***“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” (1 John 1:1-4 KJV)***

The other reason we celebrate Christ's birth because the heritage that we received from the church. We are keeping that tradition because of various and many Scriptures. Now the question is this: did the Holy Spirit speak to the Church and initiate the celebration of Christ's birth, or was it the Church's thought and desire that established that? If the answer is the Holy Spirit, then there is no more point to object celebrating it. But what if the church is the one to initiate that celebration? I may answer this question this way: certain times God grants the desire of his church and his people when the purpose is noble. God granted the desire of King David to build a house for Him. If the purpose of keeping a day or season is to celebrate the birth of Christ, honor His name, and tell about

Him, then it will be fine to celebrate it in a way that the Word of God dictates on God's church.

But now, what is today called Christmas had been engrossed with pagan things to please the people of the world. Pagan solar customs had been Christianized, and Mithraism and Saturnalia was a big influence in Christ's Birth. Mithraism, also known as the Mithraic Mysteries, was a mystery religion centered on the god Mithras that was practiced in the Roman Empire from about the 1st to 4th century. The religion was inspired by Persian worship of the sun god Sol. The Saturnalia was a yearly Roman festival dedicated to the agricultural god Saturn which was held between the 17th and 23rd of December each year during the winter solstice (A solstice is an event occurring when the Sun appears to reach its most northerly or southerly excursion relative to the celestial equator on the celestial sphere. Two solstices occur annually, around June 21 and around December 21). Originating from old agricultural rituals, the Roman festivities came to include a general round of gift-giving, holidays, and merrymaking so that it became one of the most popular celebrations in the calendar. The church chose a day in December to please pagans and make the church acceptable to them.

Christmas had taken a lot from these feasts in giving long holidays of two to three weeks in which offices close and work stop for no real reason, and that promote laziness. Spending much on food and parties promote wasting of resources. Exchange gifts promote egos, pride, and honoring people. They say that the wise men brought gifts to Christ. Yes, that is true, but Christ's family used these resources to provide for their needs in their journey to Egypt when Joseph took Jesus and his mother Mary to escape Herod. So let us give to Christ and not waste money on food and unnecessary expenses and gifts to one another and waste resources. See to it that we cannot use Scriptures to justify pagan practices in order to perpetuate them inside God's Church. Not only that, but the rest of what accompanied Christmas are non-Biblical including Christmas trees, Santa Claus, games, parties, light effects, and other decorations. You may go and search and you will get more details about the origin of these customs from the pagan world, but not from God's Word.

If we want to celebrate Christ's Birth, let us do it in a Biblical way and go along the Scriptures and follow how Christ wants us to live. Let us learn from the example of Joseph and Mary in their suffering, long traveling, accepting persecution, humbling down, accepting to live a simple life, but still not giving up to serve God.

The church needs to move away from all the worldliness and the pagan idols and customs that accompany what is called Christmas today. Nothing can destroy us and God's church like idols and pagan practices. Almost all the world is celebrating it, by taking the pagan aspect of the celebration and not the Word of God, and the church in the midst of it is getting to accept what the market is producing for Christmas simply for the sake of business.

Not only the above pagans' idols and customs need to be removed, but the church also needs to move away from all the following:

- I. The name of it: Better to call it Christ's Birth and not Christmas so people's mind will not drift toward all the current worldliness that accompany Christmas.

II. The date of it: The date needs to be moved away and changed so people will be no more in bondage to the holidays or the worldly activities that is going on at that time. The point here is not to argue about days, but just to redirect God's church away from worldliness.

For those who are not celebrating at all Christ's Birth, they are doing well, because nothing in the Scriptures compels them to do it. But, those who desire to observe and celebrate Christ's Birth, could be directed to a specific time and right manner that honor God. Below is a search from the Scriptures pertaining to the point about moving the celebration to another day. The Bible does not give us a real day of Christ's birth, but the Bible gives us an approximate period.

Christ's Birth was not in winter: Caesar will not do taxation all over the world in winter. Traveling in winter is more difficult, especially in Europe where there will be snow: **"I And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed."** (Luke 2:1 KJV) He would rather choose a season like spring or fall with a moderate and pleasant weather to make travelling easier.

Another evidence that Christ's Birth is not in winter, was the shepherds who were watching their sheep in the fields; they will not stay in the open field if it is winter, but rather will keep the sheep in their pen, **"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."** (Luke 2:8 KJV) Most likely it was a pleasant weather, for when the angels left them, they moved at once and went to see Jesus. **"15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."** (Luke 2:15-16 KJV)

Before Mary was visited by the angel of the Lord, Gabriel visited the Priest Zechariah and announced to him that his wife will have a baby, **"5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. 8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord."** (Luke 1:5-9 KJV) Zechariah was from the course of Abia, and he went to minister in the temple of God in the order of his course. King David had ordained 24 courses for the priests to minister in the sanctuary and had cast lot for them and it is recorded which time they would go to minister in the house of God. We can read that in **1 Chronicles 24:1-31** **"1 Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 2 But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office. 3 And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. 4 And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar, and thus were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers,**

and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers. 5 Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar. 6 And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, one of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar. 7 Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, 8 The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, 9 The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, 10 The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, 11 The ninth to Jeshuah, the tenth to Shecaniah, 12 The eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, 13 The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, 14 The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, 15 The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphses, 16 The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, 17 The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul, 18 The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah. 19 These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him. 20 And the rest of the sons of Levi were these: Of the sons of Amram; Shubael: of the sons of Shubael; Jehdeiah. 21 Concerning Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, the first was Isshiah. 22 Of the Izharites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath. 23 And the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. 24 Of the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir. 25 The brother of Michah was Isshiah: of the sons of Isshiah; Zechariah. 26 The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno. 27 The sons of Merari by Jaaziah; Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri. 28 Of Mahli came Eleazar, who had no sons. 29 Concerning Kish: the son of Kish was Jerahmeel. 30 The sons also of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the sons of the Levites after the house of their fathers. 31 These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren." (1 Chronicles 24:1-31 KJV) Abia or Abijah is a head of a priestly house, one of the 24 Levite groups of the priests, whom Zechariah belongs to. His lot was **"The eighth to Abijah."** (1 Chronicles 24:10 KJV) Now that determines that their time for their priest's office will be on the same time every year.

Now the first month of the Jewish calendar is the month of Abib, which was the month of Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, **"1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine. 3 And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. 4 This day came ye out in the month Abib."** (Exodus 13:1-4 KJV) **"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night."** (Deuteronomy 16:1 KJV) The month of Abib is the month of Exodus and Passover (March or April). The Lord commanded Moses to consider the month of Abib the first month of the year, **"1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, 2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of**

months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. 3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: 4 And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: 6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.” (Exodus 12:1-6 KJV) Christ our Lord was crucified in the month of Abib at the same day that the lamb of the Passover needed to be sacrificed. Our Easter celebration is also located in the month of Abib, which usually take place between the end of the month of March to the mid of the month of April. The changing of the day is due to the lunar system of the Jewish calendar which in effect is short with 11 days from the solar calendar that we use today in the Gregorian calendar. Therefore, to keep the feast in the same season of the year, the Jewish calendar every two to three years add one more month to keep the feasts timing on the same period of the year.

With the 24 courses for the priests then every course will need to do 14 or 15 days per year in the Temple of the Lord on the same season where the lot was cast on. So if we consider that the midst of March or the beginning of April is the beginning of the year, then Zechariah being on the 8th course will be finishing his course in the second half of July.

Zechariah left the temple after he finished his ministration and went to his house. *“23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.” (Luke 1:23 KJV)* For he was told by the angel that he will be dumb and can't speak till his wife gives birth, *“And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.” (Luke 1:20 KJV)* That will make us conclude that no time was wasted for him to reach home, *“And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived.” (Luke 1:24 KJV)* So when it says *‘And after those days’*, it means she got pregnant once he left his ministration and reached home.

Now the question is how long the journey was between his house and Jerusalem? We can conclude that when we know where he was living. We can conclude that from the Scriptures. When the angel told Mary that her cousin Elisabeth is pregnant, she left in haste and reached the house of Zechariah, *“39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; 40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.” (Luke 1:39-40 KJV)* So the house of Zechariah is in a city in the hill country of Judah, and being a priest, most likely the city is Hebron, as a city allocated to the priest located in the hill country of Judah as we read: *“10 Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: for theirs was the first lot. 11 And they gave them the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it.” (Joshua 21:10-11 KJV)* The real distance today between the city of Jerusalem and Hebron is 21.3 miles which need around 7 hours walk to reach. So as Zechariah left the temple in the second half of July reaching home, then by the end of July and the beginning of August Elisabeth was pregnant, for it says *“23 And it came to pass,*

that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived.” (Luke 1:23-24 KJV) So the birth of John the Baptism was most likely in the month of April

When Mary, in the city of Nazareth received the news from the angel to be pregnant by the Holy Ghost, Elisabeth, her cousin, was in her sixth month, *“And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.” (Luke 1:36 KJV)* Mary went in haste to see Elisabeth, *“39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; 40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.” (Luke 1:39-40 KJV)* When Mary entered the house and met Elisabeth, this what we can read from the mouth of Elisabeth, *“42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:42-43 KJV)* So Mary was pregnant when she reached Elisabeth's house. Now the distance between the town of Nazareth in Galilee and Hebron in the hill country of Judah is around 100 miles that need around 32 hours and 16 minutes by walking (4-5 days in maximum). With this we can infer that the difference between Mary and Elisabeth pregnancy is approximately 6 months. Then if John was born in April, Jesus' birth would be in October or end of September.

Someone may ask if it is possible to fix a date for it on our calendar today. That is not possible because as earlier explained that the Jewish calendar keep changing to keep the same season for the feasts. But we can put an approximate period as we stated above, in the month of September or October; we can celebrate on our convenience. The month of October is the month where the Jewish feast of Tabernacle and Trumpets is celebrated and in it is also the Day of Atonement. October is a month of good weather in the Near Eastern area where travel is easy for people, and that will confirm to us that is why the taxation of Caesar was in that time and why it was easy for the shepherds to watch over their flocks in the open field and how Mary and Joseph was able to move easily while Mary was pregnant.

“1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.” (Luke 1:1-4 KJV) Even with this study we may not be accurate. We are not here to argue or to project knowledge, but our aim is to move the church away from worldliness and to provide a green pasture for the sheep of Jesus to celebrate Christ's Birth, and live the truth and serve God while being away from the influences of pagan practices of what is called Christmas today that had invaded the church with much worldliness. If we as a church delight to celebrate His birth, then we can do that in a Godly way.

With this message I am putting guidelines to all workers, members, families, congregations, and outreaches of the church that are under my care, and who are wishing to celebrate Christ's Birth:

1. Don't use the Word Christmas and do not take part in any activities of it that usually take place in the months of November, December and January.
2. Chose a suitable day in the month of September or October to celebrate. If these months are not suitable to you, then you may chose other months, except the months of November, December and January where pagan worshipper celebrate Christmas.
3. Let the Scriptures expound about the suffering of the family of Jesus and their perseverance to let the mission of God to continue.
4. Celebrate with Godly songs.
5. Have a meal fellowship.
6. Avoid decorations, lights effects, and the idols of Christmas tree and Santa Claus, etc.
7. No exchanging of gifts.
8. No games.
9. If anyone willing to give for the missions of Christ let him give it to the church.
10. This decision is open to suggestions based on Scriptures whenever it is deemed a necessity to do that.

May the Lord be glorified in our midst and bless us as we abide in His Will and Plan.

My prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died for my sins on the cross and rose again from the death to give me eternal life. Lord I humble myself at your feet and seek your face with all my heart. Lord I am willing to do all what you ask me to do to move myself and the church that you died for away from worldliness and away from all the pagan practices that is infiltrating your church. Lord gives me boldness and strength to continue to serve you and do your will. This is my prayer in Jesus name. Amen*