Gerald Flurry:
Greetings, everyone. The most popular holiday in the world is Christmas. Now, we know that it’s supposed to represent peace and joy and family harmony, but quite a number of people are beginning to question that and whether or not that really is the case. We see the tradition of gift giving has been just developed into a SPREE of materialism, and we’ve all witnessed shoppers, and being mobbed or mobbing stores, and the kind of frenzied atmosphere fighting for goods, the discounted bargains, and that has just become commonplace. Is that REALLY the spirit of Christmas? What IS behind all this? We know that families go deeply into debt often, and there is depression—and oftentimes that’s related to the debt—and we see even more suicides, more crime, more drunkenness, accidents, and divorce, family disruption at Christmas time than at any other time of the year. Those are FRUITS that are a little alarming. So what IS Christmas all about, and is there maybe a hidden DANGER there that we need to be aware of?

I want to give you a few quotes. These are authoritative quotes from religious sources as well as secular sources, and I want to give you a few of them to help you see what authorities even in this world say about Christmas, as I think many of you already know. But we need to look at them nevertheless and try to get God’s perspective on all of this, or well, what is it worth if God is not there?

Here’s what the Catholic Encyclopedia says: ”Early Christians did not observe birthdays, not even Christ's birth. The Catholic theologian Orijen, A.D. 185-232, acknowledged that ‘In the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate the birthday.’” So he says they didn’t even CELEBRATE the birth of Christ or anybody else, for that matter.

Here’s one from the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, certainly another authoritative source, and I'll just give you their quote here: “Somewhere around three centuries after Jesus’ death, church leaders decided to preserve the celebration, but affix Christ's name to it.” And then here’s their quote: “The pagan festival, with its riot and merrymaking, was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its
celebration with little change in spirit and manner.” That is, it was taken from a pagan custom, they say. Those are THEIR words, not mine.

So if you look at these authorities you have to begin to question whether or not it is something we should be so involved in.

But notice here what Today’s Christian History says. They point out that: “Nowhere does Scripture advocate celebrating Christ’s birthday.” It just isn’t in the Bible; these are my words. But here’s what Christian History says: “Many believed it would be wrong to honor Christ in the same way Pharaoh and Herod were honored. Birthdays were not for pagan gods.”

Schaff-Herzog adds: “Christian preachers of the west and the near east protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated. While Christians of Mesopotamia accused the western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival.” And can you imagine what they’d think if they saw it today, if they saw what we were doing today?

So there is a strong tie, they say, to the sun god. Well, what’s THAT all about? I’ll ask a question: Is there a danger in keeping Christmas? Is there some hidden danger there in that? I want to show you something a little later that Jeremiah says that I think is very disturbing in that respect.

But here we know people get together and they can have family reunions, which certainly kept in the right way is a GOOD thing, so there’s nothing wrong with that and that can be helpful to the family, but how much of that is really a part of the celebration of Christmas? But we need to look for a HIDDEN danger in this day, and I tell you, when you look into God’s Word you do see one and it’s disturbing, to say the least.

So what does the Bible say about it? Well, if you look at Luke 2 and verse 8 it says—this is talking about the DATE of Christ's birth, December 25 and if you start researching the subject—there’s no WAY it could be on that date, and here’s what Luke 2 and verse 8 says: “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” This is Luke 2 and verse 8: “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”

Now, we wrote in our booklet: “December is in the midst of a cold, rainy season in Judea. The shepherds always brought their flocks in from the fields and mountains to be corralled by mid-October at the latest, for their protection.” You can see that in other Scriptures, Song of Solomon 2:11 and Ezra 10, verse 9 and verse 13. It was all for the protection of the sheep. So there’s more here I could give you; I don’t think I need to get into that because we’ll give you the booklet and let you prove it to yourself IN DETAIL what we’re saying here and it will give you a lot more than I can give you in this short
But there are many people who keep Christmas KNOW that it does have a pagan origin, and they say, well, they still think it’s good and what they’re doing is right and good, but there is something SUBTLE and HIDDEN here that we need to be aware of, that ALL of us need to be aware of. ANYTHING that has to do with God or is supposed to be related to what God did and all of that, well, ALL of us need to be concerned about that. I think we can all agree on that, too.

So what is that danger? If you check those pagan customs you’ll see that every single one of them BEGAN with some kind of a rebellion against God. Now, that’s just the Biblical truth as well as the truth of many secular sources, as well as religious sources.

Let me give you another quote here, from Biblica Sacra, Volume 12 notes: “The interchange of presents between friends is alike characteristic of Christmas and the Saturnalia, and must have been adopted by Christians from the pagans, as the admonition of Tertullian plainly shows.”

“The fact is, this custom fastened upon people of exchanging gifts with friends and relatives at the Christmas season has not a single trace of Christianity.” Now, this is written by Herbert W. Armstrong, I believe. Well, no, excuse me. This is taken from the Biblio Sacra and I’m quoting from that. No, I’m sorry. It IS by Mr. Armstrong. But here’s what HE has to say: “This does not celebrate Christ’s birthday nor honor it or Him! Suppose someone you love has a birthday.” And then he goes on to talk about how, instead of giving the person who has the birthday the gifts, you exchange gifts with everybody that’s there, and that’s NOT the proper way to do that. But it says: “When the wise men presented gifts to Christ in Matthew 2:1-11, they were following an ancient Eastern custom of presenting gifts to a king when they came into his presence. They were not giving gifts to each other, as many do today, but to Him.” That’s in verse 11 of Matthew 2.

Now, what about Santa Claus? Now, we KNOW as we grow older, that that is a myth, and it can be a little disturbing to young people when they learn there really IS no Santa Claus. Well, where does THAT come from? Let me read to you just a short quote here about THAT. This is taken from the Encyclopedia Britannica. You couldn’t get a much better source than THAT in a secular way. Here’s what it says, this is the eleventh edition: “Saint Nicholas, bishop of Myra, a saint honored by the Greeks and Latins on the sixth of December. A legend of his surreptitious bestowal of dowries on the three daughters of an impoverished citizen, is said to have originated the old custom of giving presents in secret on the eve of Saint Nicholas, subsequently transferred to Christmas day, hence the association of Christmas with Santa Claus.”

So you see all of these activities we have at Christmas time, they started from paganism.
Now, is that a TRIVIAL thing or is it very SIGNIFICANT? We need to know what God's view of this is. What does God say about Christmas? Can you prove that? Can I prove it? Do we really know what God thinks about all of these days like that? And Christmas is certainly the number one holiday around the world.

But here is something we DO need to think about, and there have been examples of people stating something like this after the children grow up a little older and see that they were really not told the truth about Santa Claus, well, then they say, “Well, I’m going to begin to question my belief in God.” And it can INDEED affect their faith in an adverse way, and it’s something I believe that we should think about.

Christmas means mass of Christ, which it just came to be shortened to Christ-mas or Christmas, so do you find any of the original apostles keeping Christmas? No, you don’t. Did Christ keep it? No, He didn’t keep it, either.

“The origins of Christmas lie in ancient pagan practices. Not until the fourth century A.D. —300 years after Jesus Christ lived and died,” did you have Christmas. So what’s to be done about THAT? What are we to think about THAT?

Let me give you one more quick quote here from Herbert W. Armstrong in his booklet, The Plain Truth About Christmas: “But, with the advent of Constantine as emperor, who made his profession of Christianity in the fourth century, placing Christianity on an equal footing with paganism, people of the Roman world began to accept this now-popular Christianity by the hundreds of thousands.” And then he goes on to talk about the s-u-n of God, the s-u-n was then changed to sons, s-o-n-s, sons of God and applied to Christmas. And I don’t have time to get into too much of that.

I just want to show you something that is REALLY critical here. You’ve heard of Nimrod, perhaps, in Genesis 10, verses 8 and 9. Nimrod was a great tyrant, and he ruled over much of the known world, and his name means “rebel” or “rebelled.” He rebelled, and he was the grandson of Noah’s son, Ham, and he built the Tower of Babel, the original Babylon, and ancient Nineveh, and he actually founded the Babylonian system. Now, Semiramis was his own mom, and it says here in Mr. Armstrong’s booklet: “Semiramis, through her scheming, had become known as the Babylonian ‘queen of heaven.’ That made Nimrod the ‘divine son of heaven.’ Together they became a perverted mother-son tandem.” Gradually he put himself in the place of the true God.

So listen to this quote, and then I’ll get into a Scripture I want to talk to you about that is just I think very sobering. “While Nimrod was alive, he put himself in the place of God.” And they “continued to worship him as a divine hero! They called him ‘Baal’…or master or lord.” He acted like he was lord of the whole universe. He also had the name of Tammuz, and Baal was considered the sun god, and then there was Semiramis or Astarte, who was the great queen of Assyria, or the queen of heaven.” So what does this all mean
to you?

And then there’s a lot about the evergreen tree and what it all meant, and it’s just astounding how all of those beliefs come right out of paganism! You can account for almost every tradition involved in Christmas is from paganism. Now, is that all right? Some people think it is, but is it?

Well, I don’t have time to get into any more of that, but let me go with you to Jeremiah chapter 10. Jeremiah chapter 10, notice this: “Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: (2) Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven;” or that is, in other words, the sun god, Baal, the sun god, or Nimrod, or Astarte, the queen of heaven. Don’t be dismayed at those!

Verse 3: “For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. (4) They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. (5) They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not:” Now, look, when I grew up that’s almost PRECISELY the way we would go out and get an evergreen tree for Christmas time and then decorate it exactly as they’re saying there, so that evergreen tree tradition was, well, 600 YEARS before Jesus Christ came to this Earth and was born. Now, what is the danger then? Now, Jeremiah talks about just one of these traditions and then illustrates the DANGER, the HIDEOUS DANGER, if you will, and I mean it’s ALARMING at least to me the more deeply I understand this.

Notice verses 6 and 7: “Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.” Now, here’s what Jeremiah is explaining, where the people are DISTRACTED away from THIS, the might of God. The little baby Jesus is not exactly a picture of MIGHT, is it? POWER? AUTHORITY? No, it doesn’t picture that.

Verse 7: “Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?” And then verse 7 concludes: “…there is none like unto thee.” There’s NONE like you!

So Jeremiah is saying, “Well, now wait a minute. Those traditions cause you to move away from an absolutely essential understanding of the great living, powerful, almighty God! That’s what is being illustrated here.

Notice verse 10: “But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. (11) Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. (12) He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom,
hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.” Such power God has! And in those traditions you don’t get that! You don’t have THAT pictured, and we cannot function without the power of God! We can’t SURVIVE without it very long usually.

And then the latter part of verse 13: “…he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.”

Look, we have a lot of problems in this world and we NEED God’s power! We need a religion of POWER and MIGHT and AUTHORITY to help us because we’re often TOTALLY helpless. What about all of our race problems we have today? And terrorism? And nation-destroying deficits? And political division? All the terrifying division! And we need God’s omnipotent, all-powerful MIGHT to help us! We can’t SOLVE those problems! But God can! And easily! And all of those problems are a SIGN! They’re a SIGN that Jesus Christ is about to come back and SOLVE these problems for us, whether we like it or not. He’s going to do it! And these very problems that you see around the world are a sign that He’s about to come very soon!

Notice verse 21: “For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.” So God says, look, we pastors have an ENORMOUS RESPONSIBILITY here, or we’ll just have the flock scattered. We’re going to be held more accountable than anybody else, and that’s why Jeremiah puts this FIRST.

And I want to show you the ATTITUDE that Jeremiah had, you see again saying these traditions like the tree, this evergreen tree, and all of that, it IS about other gods if you look at where it came from. And he says, now look, here is what is happening, it’s getting your mind off the true God of this AWESOME POWER that He has, that is a part of our religion if we’re following this God.

Now look, Jeremiah showed us how to solve these problems, and let me just read verse 23: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (24) O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.” So Jeremiah, the great, great Jeremiah, if he can say, “Lord, it’s not in the power of man to direct his own steps,” it just isn’t there, and he saw that and he came to God with a humble attitude and said, “God, correct ME. Correct ME. Help me get these traditions the way they SHOULD be and get your Word the way it SHOULD be. I want to see what YOU have as direction, what YOUR perspective is. That’s what I want to see. Correct me!” How many people have THAT attitude? Do I have that attitude? Well, it’s hard to be corrected at times.

But again, we need the very power of God. I could go on and give you a lot more information on that, but I don’t have time. But I do want again to tell you this all detracts from the holy days of God. Now, there is in that holy day plan we ARE taught to
memorialize the DEATH of Christ, not the birth. And that Last Great Day, everybody it says, in that Last Great Day of that holy day plan that God is going to resurrect ALL the billions and billions of people who have never known God and give them a chance to know God for the first time. Now, that is a beautiful and a wonderful truth, and we need to keep it in our thinking. We need to understand that.

I just want to read one Scripture to you that talks about the last days, perilous times are going to come, and everybody’s all wrapped up in themselves. They don’t have natural affection. They’re traitors, they’re heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. And notice what it says. Please get this! [2 Timothy 3] Verse 5: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” See God says, look, there is POWER in all of this! There is POWER in true religion! There is POWER to overcome the devil and overcome the ways of this world. There is POWER to become a very Son of God, born into the Family of God for all eternity. That’s not a fantasy!

But there is this hidden danger, you see, that we get distracted in these traditions, these pagan traditions, AWAY from the great and the powerful God, and we lose HIS perspective. What does HE say? And does anything else really matter? Does anything matter but what God thinks and what God says? And we NEED the POWER of God to solve our problems! And He says He will solve them for us! And He’s even going to protect His own people from what’s coming in these terrible end times. He says He will protect those who do His Work and give their lives to Him and dedicate themselves to Him.

Until next week, this is Gerald Flurry, goodbye, friends.

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