

heaven for thousands of years and his happiness is no nearer an end than it was at the moment he got to heaven. It's by faith that Moses made that choice, and faith is the gift of God. Ask for it - because God can give it to those who are young like you.

Wishing you God's blessing,
M. Macleod.

This article was taken from the Young Peoples Magazine of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It was written by the late Margaret Macleod, Leverburgh.

Notes:

When were shepherds in the fields?

Israeli meteorologists tracked December weather patterns for many years and concluded that the climate in Israel has been essentially constant for at least the last 2,000 years. The temperature in the area of Bethlehem in December averages around 44 degrees Fahrenheit (7 degrees Celsius) but can drop to well below freezing, especially at night. Describing the weather there, Sara Ruhin, chief of the Israeli weather service, noted in a 1990 press release that the area has three months of frost: December with 29 F. [minus 1.6 C.]; January with 30 F. [minus 1.1 C.] and February

with 32 F. [0 C.].

Snow is common for two or three days in Jerusalem and nearby Bethlehem in December and January. These were the winter months of increased precipitation in Christ's time, when the roads became practically unusable and people stayed mostly indoors.

This is important evidence to disprove a December date for Christ's birth. Note that, at the time of Christ's birth, the shepherds tended their flocks in the fields at night. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field," wrote one Gospel writer, "keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). A common practice of shepherds was keeping their flocks in the field from April to October, but in the cold and rainy winter months they took their flocks back home and sheltered them.

The time of the census as in Luke 2:1-7.

The Roman and Judean rulers knew that taking a census in winter would have been impractical and unpopular. Generally a census would take place after the harvest season, around September or October, when it would not seriously affect the economy, the weather was good and the roads were still dry enough to allow easy travel. According to the normal dates for the census, this would probably be the season of Christ's birth.

Is Christmas Christian?

Dear J,

December is a month that I don't look forward to. Can you guess one reason why? It is because December brings Christmas, with all its empty, frivolous activities. And, if you don't take part in these activities, which the world gets so excited about, almost everybody thinks that you are very strange.

But why should some people who love the Lord Jesus and who are truly thankful that he came into the world to save sinners feel sad at this time of the year? Anyway, what is wrong with setting a day apart for celebrating such a wonderful and glorious event as the birth of Christ?

There are three main reasons why we don't celebrate Christmas. The first reason is that God didn't ask us to do so. On the other hand, when God has given us a day on which to remem-

ber another great event, nearly the whole world ignores it - I mean the Sabbath Day, which marks the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Indeed I believe that, if God had told us to remember the day when Christ was born, the world would ignore it too. God has also told His people to remember the death of Christ - in the Lord's Supper. But how many really think about what Christ's death means?

The second reason why I believe that it is wrong to keep Christmas is that so many lies are associated with it. The day itself is a lie. God didn't even tell us the day of Christ's birth; what he has done is to hide it from us. I was once in Bethlehem, and the leader of our party asked the guide who was showing us some of the fields around Bethlehem if shepherds would be outside at the end of December watching over their flocks at night. The guide said, "No, the sheep at that time of the year are indoors at night because of the cold." (Actually, nearly everyone accepts that the twenty-fifth of December is not the date of Christ's birth.)

Another lie connected with Christmas is the person called Santa Claus. You have always been taught that our God is the God of truth, and it

must be a great offence to Him when people give place to these two lies at the time they claim to be celebrating the birth of His beloved Son - the One who said, "I am ...the truth.

The third reason why it is wrong to have anything to do with Christmas is because there is so much idolatry and paganism connected with it. How little of the glory of Christ people understand when they can look on a doll in a cradle and pretend to worship it, as they act out their nativity scenes! For Christ is exalted above every other being, and He sits at the right hand of God the Father. He was once a baby in the cradle; angels and men worshipped Him then, but any attempt to act out that holy scene is a dreadful idolatry.

The decoration of an evergreen tree comes from heathen religion, where trees were worshipped. In Egypt palm trees were worshipped; in Rome it was the fir. Jeremiah warns us, "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen...for the customs of the people are vain; for one cutteth a tree with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."

Satan is behind all these ungodly Christmas activities. He wants us to

forget that Christ is the glorious Conqueror who bruised his head and destroyed his power on the cross of Galvary. He doesn't care if people think about Jesus as a helpless baby so long as they enjoy themselves at their pantomimes and parties. These empty pleasures are designed by him to get us to forget God - and about death and judgement and eternity.

Don't be upset or jealous of your classmates if they are excited and happy at this time of the year. That kind of happiness is too short for you; it is just like the beautiful, dazzling bubbles which burst as soon as they are touched. Those who are chasing these pleasures then reach out for more, and all the while they are being lured away from the narrow way which leads to heaven. Remember that the pleasures of heaven will last for ever.

At this time of the year think about Moses. He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, the children of Israel, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for, which are just for a short time. He made a very wise choice, though at the time it must have seemed very foolish to most people.

Do you think he regrets that choice now? He has already been in