

Serving This Week:

Sunday Morning

Announcements: Howell Todd
Song Leader: Kyle Richardson
Opening Prayer: Howell Todd
Lord's Supper

Presiding: Kyle Richardson
Serving: Eric Horne
Ken Grandstaff
Preaching: Howell Todd
Closing Prayer: Dan Smith

Sunday Evening

Opening Prayer: Dan Smith
Preaching: Howell Todd
Closing Prayer: Ken Grandstaff

Wednesday Evening

Opening Prayer: Brian Horner
Devotional: Howell Todd
Closing Prayer: Ken Grandstaff

Serving Next Sunday:

Lord's Supper: Howell Todd
Preaching: Brian Horner
Opening Prayer: Dan Smith
Closing Prayer: Ken Grandstaff

To all our visitors - Welcome!
We hope you will come back
and worship with us soon!

TEAM MEETINGS

Correspondence - Sunday evenings
after worship see Kyle Richardson.

Visitation/Bible Study - For
assignments see Brian Horner.

Member Care - Regarding Member
needs contact Kyle Richardson.

Flower Request - Please call Lynda
Ann Sparkman: 444.0938(h) 587.8187(c)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Funeral for Vally Andrews:

Visitation today from 11-1.
Graveside service at Wilson
County Memorial Gardens at 2.

Holiday Dinner:

Dec 15 @ 6 PM. Potluck meal and
Dirty Santa. Invite your friends!

Potter's Food Drive:

Aluminum Foil
Cheerios

Pantry:

Please let Howell know of anyone
in our community who needs help!

God's Plan of Salvation

Hear the Word

(Rom 10:17)

Believe in Jesus

(John 8:24)

Repent of your sins

(Luke 13:3)

Confess faith in Christ

(Rom 10:10)

Be Baptized for forgiveness of sins

(Acts 2:38)

Live **Faithfully**

(1 Cor. 15:58)

Daily Bible Reading

Day	Scripture
Sunday (<i>Epistles</i>)	1 John 1-3
Monday (<i>The Law</i>)	Deuteronomy 20-22
Tuesday (<i>History</i>)	Nehemiah 1-4
Wednesday (<i>Psalms</i>)	Psalms 137-139
Thursday (<i>Poetry</i>)	Ecclesiastes 11-12
Friday (<i>Prophecy</i>)	Malachi
Saturday (<i>Gospels</i>)	Acts 19-20

Bethel church of Christ

2427 Sparta Pike, Lebanon TN 37090

<http://www.bethelcoc.net>

December 9, 2012

Sunday Bible Study: 10 AM
Sunday Morning Worship: 11 AM

Sunday Evening Worship: 6 PM
Wed Bible Study: 7 PM

Should I Celebrate Christmas?

Around the first of November you can see billboards which tell us to "Put Christ back into Christmas." People everywhere claim Christmas is too commercialized and say that we are over-looking the real meaning of Christmas. Some preachers will ask, "What are you going to give Christ on His birthday?" Most churches will organize Christmas plays, cantatas, and programs.

Since Christmas is recognized by most people as a religious Holy Day, it would be good for us to study its meaning. Considering Christmas has the word Christ in it, it should have some connection with the Lord. If there is a connection with the Lord, we should be able to turn to the New Testament and read of this observance. However, upon a careful examination, we fail to find a single reference to this day in the word of God.

When did men first start observing this special day? To answer this question, we have to go outside the New Testament. Historians tell us it was nearly three centuries after the death of Christ before a day was set aside for a special observance for His birth. "Christmas was for the first time celebrated in Rome in 354, in Constantinople in 379, and in Antioch in 388." (*Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Norval Geldenhuys, p. 102). A well known preacher during this time mentioned the late origin of Christmas. "Chrysostom, in a Christmas sermon, A.D. 386, says, 'It is not ten years since this day was clearly known to us...'" (*Unger Bible Dictionary*, p. 196). "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church, and before the fifth century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether January 6th, March 25th, or December 25th." (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 5, p. 641).

When was Jesus born? It comes as a shock to many individuals that the Bible does not tell us when Christ was born; but we are reasonably certain He was not born in December.

Nearly everyone remembers reading about the appearance of an angel to the shepherds. In **Luke 2:8** we read, "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night." This rules out the birth of Christ as a winter event. "According to this statement, Jesus cannot have been born in December, in the middle of the

(continued from page 1)...

rainy season, as has been since the fourth century supposed ... According to the Rabbins, the driving forth of the flocks took place in March, the bringing in of them in November..." (*Critical and Exegetical Handbook To The Gospels of Mark and Luke*, H.A.W. Meyer, p. 273).

Adam Clarke makes this observation: "It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the Passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain; during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the Passover occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to our part of October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open county during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the twenty-fifth of December, when no flocks were out in the fields." (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*, p. 857).

What about the three wise men? In every city across America you can see the famous "nativity scene" with the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, baby Jesus and the "three wise men." I do not know how many wise men there were, but I am certain they were never at the manger! Matthew tells us when they found Jesus they went "into the house" (**Matthew 2:1-11**). No mention is made of the manger. "They came to Jerusalem after Jesus had been presented in the temple, and taken back to Bethlehem, and, therefore, when the infant Jesus was more than forty days old. They must have come at least forty days before the death of Herod, for he spent the last forty days of his life at Jericho and the baths of Callirrhoe; the wise men found him still at Jerusalem. Jesus must, therefore, have been at least eighty days old when Herod died." (*The Fourfold Gospel*, J.W. McGarvey, pp. 42-43).

Who decided to make December 25 the birthday of Christ? This credit goes to the Roman Catholic Church. They explain it like this: "Numerous theories have been put forward through the last 2,000 years to explain Dec. 25 as Christmas Day. The most likely one, however, the one most generally accepted by scholars now, is that the birth of Christ was assigned to the date of the winter solstice. This date is Dec. 21 in our calendar, but was Dec. 25 in the Julian calendar which predated our own ... The solstice, when days begin to lengthen in the northern hemisphere, was referred to by pagans as the 'Birthday of the Unconquered Sun'. During the third century, the Emperor Aurelian proclaimed Dec. 25 as a special day dedicated to the sun-god, whose cult was very strong in Rome at that time. Even before this time, Christian writers already had begun to refer to Jesus as the Sun of Justice. It seemed quite logical, therefore, that as Christianity begun to dominate the religious scene in the Roman Empire, the date of the 'new-born sun' should be chosen as the birthdate of Christ. Apparently, it

bothers some people that the date for Christmas has its roots in a pagan feast. Be that as it may, it's the best explanation we have for the choice of Dec. 25 to celebrate the birth of Jesus." (*The New Question Box*, p. 28-29).

This December observance originated with pagans as a feast day to their sun-god, Mithra. It was changed into a "christian holy day" by the Roman Catholic Church.

Don't you think we need to observe the birth of Christ? People often ask this question, but I usually ask this in return, "Why should we?" **2 Peter 1:3** tells us that God has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness." Everything I need to know of a religious nature has been revealed in the Bible. **1 Peter 4:11** says that if I speak, I must speak "as the oracles of God." If God would have wanted us to observe the birth of Christ, he most assuredly would have told us!

How should I remember Jesus? God has left three memorials to Christ – all of which point to His death and resurrection.

First, water baptism reminds us of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (**Romans 6:3-4**).

Second, the Lord's supper is a constant reminder of His death. As we partake of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, we "proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (**1 Corinthians 11:26**).

Third, our worship on the Lord's day, the first day of the week, reminds us of His resurrection (**Matthew 28:1; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10**). God does not want His Son remembered as a baby lying in a manger, but as the suffering Saviour and now resurrected Redeemer.

David Padfield, www.padfield.com

Remember in Prayer

Shut Ins:

Fannie Bell Warren
Janelle Arrington
William Wells

Others:

Hollis Cluck
Muril Todd
Karen Hudson - cancer
Christy Garrett
The Bryan Family
Annie and JW Smith
Margie Taylor
Priscilla and Patrick Graves
Jessica Richardson
Dan Smith
Diane Grandstaff and family
Joe Allen
Linda Kay Edwards - surgery recovery
Dylan Speck - kidney problems
Haily Speck - melanoma
Edna Forbes
Janice Garrett
Carol Goins - Mary L.'s sister
Lila Kirk
Wanda Gates - cancer
Kathy Greer

Please call to inform us of News items or Prayer Requests: Kyle Richardson (495-7106) Dorothy Jean Smith (444-5437)

December Birthdays:

13 - Lila Kirk
17 - Howell Todd
26 - Dorothy Jean Smith