

Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

Pick a Day, Any Day

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A radio talk show host friend of mine received a letter from a listener about Christmas. He forwarded it to me for my reaction. I share the listener's letter here, in part:

"Here is something nobody is talking about and you can't either or you will likely lose your job if you do. That is Christmas is a lie that all of Christianity tells and they teach this lie to the members of their Christian churches.

The truth is Jesus Christ, our Savior, was not born on Christmas Day. The truth is he did not leave us the date of his birth in scripture. He was born while the shepherds were still out in the fields with their flocks of sheep. The sheep go into a shelter for the winter in Bethlehem where he was born.

Christmas is ancient idol worship called Saturnalia. It is really worship of the sun that makes crops grow. The shortest day of the year is about December 24. December 25 the sun in the sky is reborn as the days start to get longer."

After prayerful consideration, I shared with my friend how I would respond to that email:

"You spoke of truths in your email. You are correct. Jesus wasn't born on December 25. I know of no church that hides this fact. I included it in a Christmas message at Oakbrook last year. Here are the truths that I live by:

The truth is Jesus Christ is God incarnate. The most powerful being in the universe humbled himself by arriving on earth as a fertilized human egg.

The truth is Jesus spent 33 years providing a living example of how we are to live out our lives as followers of Christ.

The truth is Jesus was crucified, taking on our sin, fulfilling the law of the Old Testament, setting us free. His arrival was a rescue mission.

The truth is Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

The truth is when we accept Christ into our lives, we die on the cross with Him and rise from the grave with Him.

The truth is that he came. The date he came doesn't impact what that means to us. We don't know the date. If you would like to celebrate His birth and don't like December 25, please pick a date you find more suitable, given there is no way to know the correct date. Or, if you choose, don't celebrate His birth at all; there is no biblical mandate to do so. I rejoice in His coming every morning; I especially do so on the day we have chosen to celebrate His arrival."

As Paul cautioned Timothy – As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work—which is by faith. 1 Timothy 1:3-4

Paul's message to Timothy is clear – avoid endless and pointless questions and controversies that distract from the central message of the gospel. Or, as a friend and mentor often puts it – “don't major in minors.” This Christmas season, don't allow yourself to be drawn into pointless squabbles. Instead, freely share what you believe, what you receive and why you celebrate Jesus' arrival. Anything else only distracts from sharing the gospel with others and keeps you from doing God's work.