

Happy
Holidays



Bodie Hodge

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Happy Holidays

Introduction

'Tis the season for "Happy Holidays." We hear it in the stores as we are doing our "holiday" shopping. From November to January, we often hear this phrase and others like it, including "Happy New Year," "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Christmas," and have nativity scenes (Christ in a manger scene) and Christkind/Christkindl (meaning Christ child)¹ celebrations, and so on.

But in today's Western culture, people are pressured to stray away from "Merry Christmas" and gravitate toward "Happy Holidays." Christian elements associated with Christmas are disappearing and so is the terminology.

We're often told that it is safer to say "Happy Holidays" or write "X-mas" instead of "Merry Christmas" so you don't offend those who oppose Christ and Christmas. In other words, the

society is now quickly catering to an anti-Christ position—“so what!” if it offends Christians.

But does “Happy Holidays” really help the anti-Christian position? How should Christians react? Let’s evaluate these questions in more detail.

What Holidays Are in Reference When We Say “Happy Holidays”?

I’m often surprised how many people fail to name even a few of the holidays that are part of the Christmas season (which runs from the fourth Sunday before Christmas until January 6—more on this in a moment). Would you have answered: Boxing Day, St. Nicholas’ Day, Feast of Epiphany, or Advent? Some do, some say . . . “Whaaaat?”

These days are just some of the holidays within the Christmas season. The Christmas season is broken into three parts:

1. Advent Season
2. Christmas
3. The Twelve Days of Christmas

Advent Season of Christmas

The first part is the anticipation and preparation of Christmas and is sometimes called penitential season of Christmas, but normally the Advent season. Advent means “arrival” or “dawning” of an event. For instance, when Jesus Christ became a man and stepped into history, this is called the “first advent.” When Jesus comes again, as he promised he would, that is called the “second advent” or the second coming.

The Advent season celebrates Jesus’ first advent and begins with the first Advent Sunday and continues for the next three Sundays prior to Christmas. Because it is always four weeks prior to Christmas, it moves around on our modern Gregorian calendar (the calendar most of us use today). But it typically begins in late November or very early December. It tends to be near the US holiday that always falls on the fourth Thursday of November called “Thanksgiving.”²

Each Sunday leading up to Christmas is respectively the First Advent Sunday, Second Advent Sunday, Third Advent Sunday, and Fourth or Final Advent Sunday. The Advent or penitential

season of Christmas draws to a close on Christmas Eve—the evening before Christmas.

Commonly, we tend to mark the beginning of the Christmas season with the close of Thanksgiving in the US and businesses mark it with an incredible shopping day that has morphed into Black Friday³ (in some cases, stores start the evening before and call it Black Thursday).⁴

The Advent Season is also close to St. Andrew's Day, which is always celebrated on November 30. So, this holiday is sometimes part of the Advent season and sometimes immediately precedes it. Traditionally, St. Andrew's Day (not at the conclusion of Thanksgiving) had been used as the marker to indicate the Advent season was upon us.

Falling on December 6 is St. Nicholas' Day. St. Nicholas of Myra was a bishop (minister/pastor) in the AD 300s. He died on December 6, hence the day that is used to celebrate his life. He was an orphan who became a wealthy man living in a nation we call Turkey today, traditionally known as Asia Minor (the town of Myra was later called Kale and is now called Demre).

St. Nicholas used his wealth to help the less fortunate (for example, he kept some poor, young girls out of forced prostitution by paying their debt). He was said to have hung stockings of coins for the poor on windowsills and so on. For his faith in Christianity, he was persecuted by Roman Emperor Diocletian and put in jail for a time. He was released by Emperor Constantine about AD 325.

Because St. Nicholas' Day always falls in the Christmas season, it makes sense why Christmas today has a corrupted version of him during the Christmas season. Saint Nickolas is corrupted into Santa Claus (think *Sainta niclaus*).

Sadly, attributes of God are applied to St. Nicholas. This paganized version of St. Nicholas sees all, judges between naughty and nice, blessings (gifts) comes from him, can be everywhere at the same time, etc. It's better to leave St. Nicholas as St. Nicholas—and as a result, many Christians avoid using Santa Claus as a deceptive tool on children.

Christmas Day

The second part of the Christmas season is of course Christmas Day (also called The Nativity of Our Lord), celebrated on December 25.

Christmas has been widely celebrated by underground Christians and documented by Christians since about AD 200. Christmas became very popular when Christianity was allowed to be out in the open after the Edicts of Toleration and Milan in AD 311 and 313 respectively.

Popular early church father Sextus Julius Africanus wrote the *Chronographiai* around AD 221 which put the conception of Christ at March 25—nine months prior to December 25, the date being used for Christmas. For context, this is about 125 years since the last of Jesus' apostles died. Some Christians still celebrate an ancient feast on March 25 called the Feast of Annunciation (also called *Conceptio Christi*, Solemnity of the Annunciation, Lady Day, or Feast of the Incarnation) celebrating the immaculate conception of Christ.⁵

Is December 25 the actual day of Christ's birth? That is a great question with mixed

reviews, but what we know is that widespread use of celebrating December 25 in churches across the Roman Empire as the birth and first nativity of Christ was very early.

In the AD 300s, Ephraim the Syrian writing about the first nativity or Christmas points out that “all men honour the day of Thy birth. Thou righteous One, keep Thou the glory of Thy birth; for even Herod honoured the day of His Birth!”⁶ John Cassian, who points out the connection between Christ’s birth and its connection to Epiphany (the Twelfth Day of Christmas) in the late AD 300s and early AD 400s, said:

In the country of Egypt this custom is by ancient tradition observed that—when Epiphany is past, which the priests of that province regard as the time, both of our Lord’s baptism and also of His birth in the flesh, and so celebrate the commemoration of either mystery not separately as in the Western provinces but on the single festival of this day.⁷

December 25 was defended by Sulpitius Severus in consultation with Sabinus and Rufinus in chapter 27 of *Sacred History* (*Historia Sacra*) in AD 403. The point is that Christmas, the birth of

Christ, was recognized and celebrated from the early days of the church.

X-mas

Christmas is also denoted as X-mas/X'mas/Xmas. The letter *Chi* (X) in Greek was used as the shorthand notation of Christ, being the first letter of the name Christ or, more specifically, *Christos* (Χριστός).

Today, a few people unwittingly think if they use “X-mas,” they are deleting the name Christ from this holiday because of anti-Christian sentiment. However, X-mas is an ancient Christian usage for Christmas whether they realize it or not.

Pagan Holiday Copycat?

Some modern claims about Christmas is that it is born out of pagan celebrations such as:

1. *Sol Invictus*
2. *Saturnalia*

Sol Invictus means “unconquered sun.” *Sol* means “sun” and is where we get the name “solar” for instance. *Sol Invictus* [or more properly *Dies*

Natalis Solis Invicti (Birth of the Unconquered Sun)] was the celebration of the Roman sun god in the latter stages of the Roman Empire and also the patron of Roman soldiers.

Sol Invictus, however, came into existence well after we have recorded history that Christmas was widely celebrated. *Sol Invictus* was first started by Roman emperor Lucius Aurelian in AD 274. If anything, the pagans took Christmas and wanted a pagan alternative.

Whether *Sol Invictus* is related to the winter solstice is uncertain. If it were meant to be, then they missed it by a couple of days! The shortest day of the year is the winter solstice between December 20–23, where *Sol Invictus* falls on December 25. Solstices mark the changing of the seasons and the godly, since Adam's creation in Genesis 1, have utilized the sun, moon, and stars to mark these events (e.g., Genesis 1:14).

Saturnalia is obviously the popular festival to the god Saturn (god of the harvest and time) in the Roman pantheon. It was celebrated on December 17. Later, it was expanded into a three-day and then seven-day festival marking

the winter sowing season. It is the equivalent festival of the Greek *Kronia* with the Greek equivalent god called Chronos/Chronus/Kronos/Cronus, who is the god of harvest and time (the name reflects time, think of chronology, chronometer, etc.).

Regardless, this festival was always finished before Christmas anyway. So, if Christians were taking this pagan day and making a Christian alternative, they failed miserably! They missed it by about a week!

Interestingly, the Roman Saturn (where we get the name Saturday and the planet Saturn) and the Greek equivalent Chronos, is a corruption of Noah. An ancient historian, Eupolemus (as preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea in the early to mid-AD 300s), writes,

The Babylonians say, that the first was Belus, called Cronus or Saturn (that is, Noah), and of him was begotten another Belus and Chanaan (it should be read Cham), and he (i.e., Ham) begat Chanaan, the father of the Phoenicians; and of him another son, Chus, was begotten, whom the Greeks call Asbolos,

the father of the Ethiopians, and the brother of Mestram, the father of the Egyptians.⁸

For the reader, you should be able to recognize Chanaan/Canaan in this list, whom God judged and gave their land to the Israelites led by Joshua. Also, Belus is a title passed from Noah and to his son Ham/Cham and so forth. Although not mentioned here, this title ultimately passes as far down as Nimrod, the son of Cush (Chus) and was corrupted in Bel and Baal, which is where the pagan Baal worship in the Old Testament came from—merely a form of ancestor worship.

But of significant note, Chronos or Saturn is Noah. It is a corruption of Noah to a godlike status. Sadly, this makes sense. Noah and his early progeny lived longer lifespans (Noah lived 350 years after the flood, Shem lived 500 years after the flood, and so forth).

As the ages subsequently drop, these patriarchs outlived great, great, great grandchildren. Noah, for instance, outlived his great, great, great, grandson Peleg!⁹ So many of these patriarchs in cultures were looked at as though

they were immortals or gods. These gods still died, but they just outlived everyone else.

Another thing that happens is that some of these patriarchs and their descendants get mixed up in their orally transmitted accounts. And the accounts themselves get warped, paganized, and embellished.¹⁰

Fascinatingly, Noah, the oldest patriarch after the flood who became the first farmer and trainer of farmers (Genesis 9), is corrupted into the god of the harvest and time. The point is that Saturn/Chronos, which is where *Saturnalia* and *Kronia* come from, is actually based on a biblical person—Noah. So that day really shouldn't belong to pagans in the first place.

Twelve Days of Christmas

For the third and final part of the Christmas season, we have the Twelve Days of Christmas, also known as Twelfthtide, which is the celebration of Christ's significance and his work. Usually, when I mention the Twelve Days of Christmas, people immediately begin thinking of the popular Christmas song. In fact, many in today's culture have forgotten

about the Twelve Days of Christmas and just think it is a popular song everyone sings at Christmas! Interestingly, the song is based on the real Twelve Days of Christmas!

The Twelve Days of Christmas begin the day after Christmas, which is called Boxing Day. No—it has nothing to do with the sport of boxing. The twelfth or final day of Christmas is the Feast of the Epiphany, or simply Epiphany. The Feast of Epiphany goes back to celebrations recorded in the AD 200s as well, with the Homilies (The Fourth Homily) between AD 213 and 270.¹¹

I've noticed that many of the Twelve Days of Christmas are shared commonly across the board of Christians around the world. However, a few of the days are specific or celebrated on different days to various denominations or church splits. For those who are not familiar with basic church history, there have been three major splits in the church. They are:

1. Oriental Church Split occurred about AD 450 when churches from Africa to India separated.

2. The Great Schism which happened about AD 1000 was a split between the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western church (Rome).
3. The Reformation was when Protestant churches split from Rome to return to scriptural authority.

We are currently living in the midst of another (fourth) split I've dubbed the "Creation Reformation." This is where some churches are mixing their religion with secular humanism (naturalism/millions of years/evolution), and then there are those churches who stand on Scripture as the truth in all areas. The latter are churches that adhere to biblical authority.

As a note, many Christians coming out of the Reformation retained the Christmas season—Twelvetide and all—however, some Christians later became opposed due to the pagan infiltration occurring during the festivities during the Christmas season. One group was the Puritans, who went so far as to legally ban Christmas in New England. But this was not to last; Christmas regained its importance in the churches and Christmas even became a national holiday in 1870 in the United States.

As mentioned, a few of the holidays of the Twelve Days of Christmas tend to vary based on denomination and splits—so bear with me here. As an example, many in the Orthodox Church celebrate Christmas on January 7 and the Twelve Days end on January 19 (so their days would have to be adjusted calendrically).

Also, some count the twelve days beginning with Christmas, where others begin the day after Christmas (the latter is the more common method). The point is there are plenty of variations and liberties taken on the specifics of these twelve days of celebration.

With those liberties in mind, here are the Twelve Days of Christmas geared toward those generically in the Protestant Reformation with just a few of the many deviations listed in brackets¹²:

Day 1: December 26—Boxing Day or Stephen’s Day [Synaxis/Celebration of Mary—Orthodox Church (OC), Wren’s Day—Ireland and a few others]

The first day of Christmas is known as Stephen’s Day or Boxing Day—the first martyr

of the church after the resurrection and he gave his all as a testimony to Jesus Christ. It consists of the Feast of Stephen. This is a day dedicated to giving to the poor. It is also called Boxing Day in remembrance of giving boxes of food to the poor. Read Acts 6:8–8:2.

Day 2: December 27—Apostles Day [Stephen’s Day—OC, Feast of St. John—Anglican]

The second day of Christmas (Apostles Day) remembers the apostles beginning with John, the apostle “whom Jesus loved” and who was present at the crucifixion. It is customary to light candles on this day because John spoke of light versus darkness in a spiritual sense. Traditionally, the second day of Christmas was also a day to bless wine and toast it (in moderation of course)—but that can be left up to local church discretions. Read Psalm 104:15, Amos 9:13–14, John 2:3–11, and 1 John 1:1–2:3.

Apostles

1. John the *son* of Zebedee and brother of James

2. Andrew (Peter's brother)
3. James the *son* of Zebedee
4. Simon Peter (Cephas)
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Thomas
8. Matthew the tax collector
9. James the *son* of Alphaeus
10. Lebbaeus Thaddaeus
11. Simon the Canaanite
12. ~~Judas Iscariot~~, who forfeited his right as an apostle
13. Matthias (Acts 1:20–26), who replaced Judas
14. Paul (2 Corinthians 11:5, 2 Corinthians 12:11, etc.)
15. Barnabas (Acts 14:14)
16. James the brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19)
17. Jesus is THE apostle (Hebrews 3:1)

Day 3: December 28—Ember Day or Holy Innocents Day

The third day of Christmas is Ember Day where we recall the martyrs, particularly the Holy Innocents (those killed by Herod seeking to kill Jesus). It is a day to pray and fast for orphans and children and to teach people why the modern form of child sacrifice, abortion, is wrong. Read Exodus 1:8-2 and Matthew 3:12-21.

Day 4: December 29—Martyrs and Sacrifice Day [Holy Innocents Day—OC]

The fourth day of Christmas remembers all who have been exiled, murdered, and persecuted for defending the faith against all opposition (Martyrs and Sacrifice Day). It is a time to remember pastors/ministers/bishops, missionaries, Christian leaders (i.e., deacons and elders), apologists, and even previous reformers and Christians leaders and all that they sacrifice(d) to follow Christ. It is a time to encourage current leaders to defend the authority of God and his Word above all others. Gifts can be given to current leaders to show support and

encouragement. Read Isaiah 52:7, Romans 10:13–17, and Ephesians 4:11–16.

Day 5: December 30—Holy Family Day [Thomas Becket Day—Anglican]

On the fifth day of Christmas, we celebrate Holy Family Day. This consists of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, as well as the rest of the Holy Family, including Jesus' earthly half-siblings (i.e., James, Jude/Judas, Joses, Simon, and his sisters). This is a time to bless our immediate and extended families and pray for them and dedicate them to the Lord. Read Matthew 1:18–25, Matthew 13:55, and Mark 6:3.

Day 6: December 31—Hogmanay Day or New Year's Eve [Feast of St. Silvester—Roman Catholic Church (RCC), St. Egwin Day, Three Kings Day—Hispanic and Latin America]

New Year's Eve is the sixth day of Christmas, also known as Hogmanay/Hogmane Day (others have *Hoggo-nott* or *Hoog Min Dag*, meaning great love day or holy month or holy morning—for the looking forward to the first day of the year). This is the day for traditional

games like shooting a bow (archery), javelin toss, and in our modern vernacular, shooting contests. Granted, this is on our modern Gregorian calendar while different days were the first and last day of the year depending on calendar. To see significant events that occurred on the first day of the first month in Scripture, see Genesis 8:13, Exodus 40:2, Exodus 40:17, 2 Chronicles 29:17, Ezra 7:9, Ezra 10:17, and Ezekiel 29:17–20.

**Day 7: January 1—New Year's Day
[Circumcision of Christ or Feast of
St. Basil and St. Gregory—OC/RCC,
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Day—
RCC, The Holy Name Day—Anglican]**

The seventh day of Christmas celebrates the new year and a new beginning, for Christians to celebrate passing from death to life as a new creation in Christ (e.g., John 5:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 3:14). It is a time to share your testimony to your family and friends of how the Lord saved you. Then, communion should follow it. Read Psalm 119:88, 1 Corinthians 1:4–7, 2 Timothy 1:8, 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, and 1 Corinthians 11:20–29.

Day 8: January 2—Church Father’s Day [Forefeast of the Theophany—OC]

The eighth day of Christmas is the day to call to mind the church fathers (Church Father’s Day) and how they stayed the course to which Jesus Christ and the apostles laid the groundwork. It remembers their steadfast proclamation of teaching the good news of Jesus Christ. Try to call to mind certain early church fathers that the apostles taught and delivered the faith that was to be once for all [e.g., Timothy (to whom Paul wrote and traveled), Jude (author of Jude and brother of Christ), Clement (Philippians 4:3), Ignatius and Polycarp (disciples of John), Apollos (1 Corinthians 3:6)]. Read Ephesians 2:19–22 and 2 Peter 3:2.

Day 9: January 3—Holy Name of Jesus Day or Triune Day [Malachi Day—OC]

The ninth day of Christmas is the day we celebrate the naming of Jesus. This is a day to recall the names of Jesus and the names of God (Mighty God, *Elohim*, Jehovah, Prince of Peace, I Am, Messiah, Son of God, the Word, Christ, etc.) and their significance. It could be called Triune

Day, because names of all three persons of one triune Godhead¹³ are to be discussed, and the Athanasian Creed¹⁴ is to be read after the names of Jesus have been discussed.¹⁵ All of the foot-noted items here can be used on this holy day celebration. Read Philippians 2:10–11.

Day 10: January 4—Presentation Day or Simeon and Anna’s Day [Apostles Day—OC, some denote this day as the Holy Name of Jesus Day]

The tenth day of Christmas is Presentation Day or Simeon and Anna’s Day, when Jesus was presented at the temple on the fortieth day and the turtledoves/pigeons were sacrificed (customary for those who were poor). Both Simeon and Anna saw the blessed Christ child. It is a day to present ourselves and our children and grandchildren to the Lord and ask for forgiveness of our sin (repentance). This fortieth day was prior to the reception of precious gifts of the wise men, which included gold, to offer such a humble sacrifice. Read Leviticus 12:1–4 and Luke 2:22–39.

Day 11: January 5—Angel and Shepherds Day or Epiphany Eve [Feast of St. Simeon Stylites—RCC, St. Elizabeth Seton Day—American RCC]

On the eleventh day of Christmas, it is a time to remember the shepherds and angels (Angel and Shepherds Day or Epiphany Eve).¹⁶ The angels announced the Advent of the Lord to Mary, Joseph, Zacharias, and the shepherds who were the first to worship Jesus. It is wise to read the entire account of Jesus' birth in both Matthew and Luke. It is also a time to plan for the feast of the Epiphany, which occurs the next day. Read Matthew 1:20–24, Matthew 2:13–19, Luke 1:13–21, Luke 1:26–38, and Luke 2:8–18.

Day 12: January 6—Epiphany or Feast of Epiphany

The twelfth day of Christmas is the celebration of the Epiphany—when the magi visited the Christ-child and presented gifts to him—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Though this is honored on the twelfth day, it was not until after the fortieth day when Jesus was presented at the temple that the magi arrived.¹⁷

The magi saw Jesus at a house, not the manger scene, and the Holy Family immediately went to Egypt for some time after the magi to flee from Herod, the king ruling out of Jerusalem. This is the final day of the Twelve Days of Christmas. Traditionally, it was a time for great feasting and drinking wine (in moderation and under local church discretion) and presentation of the final gifts to your family. Read Matthew 2:1–12.

After this last day of Christmas, the Christmas season officially comes to a close, end-capping the traditional term “Happy Holidays.” As a caveat, I’m not telling readers to celebrate or not to celebrate these holidays and involve themselves in the respective traditions. Instead, I’ll leave that to your family and church’s discretion.

What Is a Holiday?

A holiday is literally a “holy day,” being derived from the Old English *hāligdæg* (*hālig* meaning holy and *dæg* meaning day). Naturally, it is predicated on holiness which is an attribute of the Holy God of the Bible.

Holy means sacred, spiritually perfect, hallowed, and godly. This is why we call the Bible the Holy Bible. Bible literally means “the book”—or more properly, the collection of books from God. Furthermore, it is why Christians strive to live a godly and holy life as God patterned for man in the life of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:16).

The God of the Bible began instituting holy days in the Old Testament as types and shadows of himself, his character, and his works (Colossians 2:16–17). Some of these include:

1. Weekly Sabbath (e.g., Exodus 16:23–29, 20:8–11)¹⁸
2. Passover (e.g., Exodus 12:1–4; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:1–14, 28:16; Deuteronomy 16:1–7; Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12–26; John 2:13, 11:55; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:28)
3. Feast of Unleavened Bread (e.g., Exodus 12:15–39, 13:3–10, 23:15, 34:18; Leviticus 23:6–8; Numbers 28:17–25; Deuteronomy 16:3–8; Mark 14:1, 14:12; Acts 12:3)
4. Firstfruits (e.g., Exodus 23:19, 34:26; Leviticus 23:9–14; Deuteronomy 26:5–10)

5. Feast of Weeks (Exodus 23:16, 34:22; Leviticus 23:15–21; Numbers 28:26–31; Deuteronomy 16:9–12)
6. Feast of Trumpets (e.g., Leviticus 23:23–25; Numbers 29:1–6; 2 Samuel 6:15)
7. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur, e.g., Leviticus 16:1–34, 23:26–32; Numbers 29:7–11)
8. Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (e.g., Exodus 23:16, 34:22; Leviticus 23:33–43; Numbers 29:12–34; Deuteronomy 16:13–15; 1 Kings 8:3; 2 Chronicles 7:1; Zechariah 14:16–19; John 7:2)

There was also a Jubilee year, after seven cycles of seven years (49 years), the fiftieth year was the Jubilee! The point is that God gave holidays to man. In a nutshell, holidays exist by being predicated on the existence of the Holy God of the Bible.

The New Testament continues in this tradition with the Lord's Day, the first day of the week (e.g., Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10)—which is when Christ resurrected. The

breaking of bread, also called the last supper, Lord's supper, Communion, or the elements, is a New Testament regular observance of the Passover fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus, the Christ, is the final and perfect Passover lamb. He was sacrificed and resurrected as the ultimate victor once for all. The Lord's supper celebrates Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Celebrating new holidays dedicated to the Lord is a Christian freedom. As the Bible says:

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:5-6)

We see something like this in the intertestamental period. The Jews came up with a new festival—Hanukkah.

Hanukkah

Just as man is made in the image of the God (Genesis 1:26–27) who instituted festivals, so man has honored God with new festivals. The godly Jews, for example, honored God with a holiday when they developed an 8-day winter festival called Hanukkah or Festival of Dedication (“Hanukkah” is derived from the word “dedication” in Hebrew). It was to rededicate the second temple, and one tradition is to progressively light a special 9-branch candle holder called a menorah. This is why this holy day is sometimes called the Festival of Lights.

Jesus had no problem joining this celebration at the second temple of God in Jerusalem approximately 2,000 years ago (John 10:22–23). Jews often celebrate this, but so do many Christians as a way of honoring God.

There is nothing inherently wrong with a Christian celebrating this, and Christians are happy to include this as part of the phrase “Happy Holidays.” This is not a holiday prescribed in the Bible, and yet, Jesus shows us the freedom we can have to make new holidays dedicated to the Lord.

Conclusion

“Happy Holidays” is a common Christian phrase that largely includes the entire Christmas season. It extends from the fourth Sunday prior to Christmas (First Advent Sunday) until January 6 with the Feast of Epiphany. Clearly, there is a lot in between. But let’s not forget the reason for the season.

Jesus Christ, the eternal and uncreated Son of God, became a man (John 1; Colossians 1; Hebrews 1)—remaining fully God and becoming fully man. Becoming a man—our relative—was a task all too easy for an all-powerful God. Christ stepped into history to ultimately die on a cross for sin.

The infinite Son of God took the full measure of wrath for our sin upon himself. He had the power to lay down his life and take it up again (e.g., John 10:17–18). This shows he alone holds the power over life and death. The infinite punishment we deserve for sin against a perfect, infinite, just, and holy God was satisfied in Jesus’ sacrifice.

The Christmas season should be a time to reflect how God alone was the one who made salvation possible through the blood of Christ. It shows the love that God has for us by sending the babe in a manger to rescue sinners.

Endnotes

- ¹ German for child or children is “kind, kinder,” which is also the root for our English “kindergarten.”
- ² Originally, Thanksgiving was celebrated on the last Thursday in November, but in 1939, it was adjusted to be the fourth Thursday of November.
- ³ The name Black Friday comes from companies selling so much on that day that it gets them out of the red and into the black—in other words, it helps companies get from being in debt (in the red) to making a profit (in the black).
- ⁴ In ancient times, the day often began at sunset—we still see this on the Babylonian/Jewish calendar. This is a reflection of cultures as they retain the evening then morning cycle, which is how God created successively during creation week (Genesis 1:1–2:3).
- ⁵ The Feast of Annunciation was originally April 6 in some churches, but it represented more than just the conception then. It also collectively included things like Christ’s birth, circumcision, and baptism.

- ⁶ Ephraim the Syrian, On the Nativity of Christ in the Flesh, Hymn III AD 306–373, biblestudytools.com/history/early-church-fathers/post-nicene/vol-13-gregory-ephraim-and-aphrahat/ephraim-syrus/hymn-iii.html.
- ⁷ John Cassian, *Conferences of John Cassian*, chapter 2, Of the custom which is kept up in the Province of Egypt for signifying the time of Easter, AD 360–435, ccel.org/ccel/cassian/conferences.ii.xi.ii.html.
- ⁸ Eusebius of Caesarea, Praepar. Evangel. l. 9. c. 17. p. 419.
- ⁹ Bodie Hodge, *Tower of Babel* (Master Books: Green Forest, AR, 2013), pp. 199–204.
- ¹⁰ This is why in some instances we see the Saturn and Chronos figure convoluted into Japheth, Kittim, or Ham (some of Noah’s descendants in Genesis 10) in various accounts.
- ¹¹ The Fourth Homily, On the Holy Theophany, or on Christ’s Baptism, AD 213–270, biblestudytools.com/history/early-church-fathers/ante-nicene/vol-6-third-century/gregory-thaumaturgus/fourth-homily.html.
- ¹² Taken from: B. Hodge, The Twelve Days of Christmas (for Protestants), *Biblical Authority Ministries*, December 16, 2015, biblicalauthorityministries.wordpress.com/2015/12/16/the-twelve-days-of-christmas/. Used by permission.
- ¹³ Bodie Hodge, “God Is Triune,” AnswersInGenesis.org/who-is-god/the-trinity/god-is-triune/.
- ¹⁴ The Athanasian Creed, carm.org/christianity/creeds-and-confessions/athanasian-creed-500-ad.

- ¹⁵ Some names can be found here: gotquestions.org/names-of-God.html and gotquestions.org/names-Jesus-Christ.html.
- ¹⁶ January 5 also happens to be my (Bodie Hodge's) birthday!
- ¹⁷ This is because they clearly hadn't received the expensive gifts from the magi; they sacrificed doves (Luke 2:24), a sign of being poor. Those gifts likely helped fund their trip to Egypt to avoid Herod. Was it one year and twelve days after the birth of Christ that the magi arrived? It's possible. Nonetheless, Epiphany, which is the twelfth day after Christmas, is an ancient day set aside to honor this event.
- ¹⁸ See Hosea 2:11; Colossians 2:16.

“Happy Holidays” has become a token phrase typically used during the Christmas season. This is especially true as our culture increasingly caters to an anti-Christian message.

But where did this phrase come from? What does the word “holiday” mean? How should Christians react?

This clear and concise booklet explores the origins of many Christmastime festivities as it answers these questions, among others.



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