

Our Attitude Toward Secular Religious Holidays and Observances

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➤ Intro:

- We are approaching the season when a great number of people observe a number of secular religious holidays
 - **illus.: St. Nicholas Day, 12/6**
 - Dutch version of Santa Clause, celebrated with feasting and gift giving
 - **illus.: Christmas, 12/25**
 - **observance of Christ's birth**
 - **date** of 12/25 not set until A.D. 440, date chosen to replace the pagan worship of sun gods and the winter solstice festivals throughout much of the world
 - **as the practice spread, pagan practices** such as trees, lights, decorations, mistletoe, giving presents, yule logs, and merrymaking originating from sun worshiping were mixed with Christmas traditions
 - **illus.: Hanukkak, 12/16-12/23**
 - **Jewish Festival of Lights**, commemorates the Maccabean recapture and rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 165-164 B.C.
- There are other secular religious holidays observed at other times of the year
 - **illus.: Easter**
 - **observed between March 22 and April 25**, depending which method of computation used, in specific year
 - **commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ** from his death by crucifixion — **observances** include worship services beginning at sunrise, special music, feasting, and parades
- **What attitude should we have toward secular religious holidays?**

➤ Terms: Secular and Religious — Secular Religious Holiday

- **understanding the terms “secular” and “religious”** are important to communicate
- **terms secular and religious:** — as relate to this topic
 - **secular:** not overtly or specifically religious <secular music> (Webster)
 - **illus.:** “Bless Be The Tie” is a religious song / “Star Spangled Banner” is a secular song
 - **religious:** relating to or manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity; of, relating to, or devoted to religious beliefs or observances (Webster)
 - **illus.:** assembling with the saints to worship is religious / assembling with friends to watch a movie is secular
- - **a secular religious holiday is a holiday that is both secular and religious - has both components**
 - **illus.:** Christmas is a secular religious holiday / New Years and Kwanzaa are secular holidays
 - **note: in the law of Christ, there are no religious holidays (holy days)** as there were in the Old Testament
- **We cannot observe secular religious holidays as a work of the church or a matter of salvation**
 - **The church is subject to Christ - He is the head and Savior — must obey the head to be saved**
 - **Eph. 5:23** Jesus head and Savior of the body — **Eph. 1:22-23** which is the church
 - - **Eph. 5:24** therefore church subject to Christ
 - **Heb. 5:9** (must obey) Jesus, source of eternal salvation to those who obey Him
 - **We can only observe the things authorized by Christ, in the church**
 - - **Col. 3:17** in the name (authority) of Christ
 - **Cannot bring secular religious holiday observances into the church - they are according to man's doctrine**
 - - **1 Cor. 4:6** not go beyond what written, too far condemned
 - **2 Jn. 1:9** go too far, not abide in the teaching of Christ, not have God. . . .
 - - **Matt. 15:8-9** vain worship if according to doctrines of men — **illus.: Christmas, man-made**

- **As individuals, we have liberty to observe others days — but can't bring into church or bind on others**
 - **Rom. 14 liberties over matters of opinions — observing days**
 - vs. 1 not be judgmental over matter of opinions
 - vs. 2 matters concerning foods
 - vs. 5a matter regarding observing of days
 - vs. 5b must be convinced in own mind it is right — **if not convinced, don't do it — illus. Beth, us**
 - vs. 23 matter of faith, not doubt or sin
 - vs. 6a do it for the Lord
 - vs. 6b-8 explanation why do it for the Lord — **anything we do not for the Lord is sin**
 - vs. 19-22 not put a stumbling block in front of a brother (stumble denotes sin) - in what do, or how do
 - - **illus.: Paul's observance of Pentecost** at the end of his 3rd missionary journey
 - **Acts 20:16** hurried to Jerusalem at end of 3rd missionary journey to be there at Pentecost
 - **Greek in vs. 16 shows** that Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for the “whole day” (Robertson)
 - **Why did Paul want** to be there for the day?
 - **to present the collection** he was taking on that day - seems unlike Paul
 - **to see brethren** who would be there - they would be there on days before and after
 - **to be at the feast** - observe what was now a secular religious holiday
 - **Acts 21:23-24 Paul kept customs** of the Mosaic Law when with the Jews — **cf. 1 Cor. 9:20**
 - **Can a Christian observe these holidays “religiously” as long as it's on a personal basis?**
 - **i.e. / illus.:** can a Christian observe Christmas personally, on a religious basis, or only secularly
 - can a Christian think about Jesus' birth on Christmas, while reading the Bible and praying
 - or can he only open presents and eat, keeping all thoughts of Jesus out of his mind, like a Muslim who observes Christmas strictly on a secular basis
 - **yes, as long as that which we observe is righteous, and it's observed in a righteous manner**
 - **Rom. 14:5-6 observed for the Lord - we do all for God — therefore must be righteous**
 - **illus.: Halloween**, can observe the secular aspects but not the pagan religious acts
 - **illus.: Valentine's Day**, can observe the secular traditions but not venerate a man ordained a saint by men
 - **illus.: Christmas**, we can observe the secular traditions, and religious traditions that do not transgress Christ's law
 - **Benefits of living in a society that observes secular religious holidays — whether observe it or not**
 - **good for our nation— reminds us of important religious events and Christian ethics, good opportunity to pray for nation and in regards to historical religious events**
 - **illus.: Christmas**, recognize the birth of most important person to be born and walk the earth
 - **illus.: Easter**, recognize the resurrection of Christ as a real event, most important event in world history
 - **evangelistic opportunities:**
 - **share the truth about Jesus, God**
 - **illus.:** Christmas not in the Bible, unlikely Jesus born in Dec.
 - **share the truth about the church**
 - **illus.:** Jesus is head and Savior, must obey Him, He is the only one who can institute a holy day in the church, He has not authorized a holy day observance of His birth, as individuals we are liberties to observe days that are not observed in the church
 - **Summary / Inv.**
 - **whether you observe secular religious holidays or not**
 - **be fully convinced** of what you are doing and **do it for the Lord**

- **take advantage of the opportunities** they provide to talk to others about God and think about spiritual things
— **inv.: live for the Lord, do all for Him**