

Ignite Lesson

Why We Don't Celebrate Christmas

Objective (1 minute): To have the teens understand why we don't celebrate Christmas.

To have the teens understand why we celebrate the biblical holy days.

Gain Attention (5 minutes): Why do most Christians celebrate Christ's birth on December 25th?

Teacher Note: Allow the students to answer, but make sure you work in Satan's role and have a student read the scriptures and discuss the significance of the scriptures in relation to the subject matter.---Revelation 12:9---Satan deceives the whole world and these false Christian holidays hide God's true holy days...---II Corinthians 11:4---Satan can appear as a positive force just like Christmas seems like a really nice thing.

Stimulate Recall of Prior Knowledge (3 minutes): Ask the students what they already know about the subject.

Teacher Note: You might want to flip chart what they come up with. As you continue into your lesson cross off what they may have come up with that relates to this lesson content (the Present Material section below is the lesson content).

Present Material (20-25 minutes): When presenting "History" sources relate the material in a teaching format. Don't read it word for word. When addressing any scriptures have a teen read the verse out loud and then discuss the significance of the verse. "Q" signifies possible questions you can ask in relation to the material. "A" signifies a point (answer to the question) you may want to address if the teens do not provide a suitable answer.

1) History---Encyclopedia Americana, 1944 edition, states: "Christmas....It was, according to many authorities, not celebrated in the first centuries of the Christian Church...a feast was established in memory of this event (Christ's birth) in the fourth century (300s A.D.). In the fifth century the Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol (Sun god), as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed."

Q: What is the significance of Christmas not being celebrated for 200-300 years after Christ?

A: It must not be very important if Christ and the apostles didn't teach it.

A: Christ, the apostles, and the early church celebrated God's biblical holy days.

2) Scripture---Luke 2:8---Shepherds were in the field watching their flocks at the time of His birth.

Teacher Note: Have a student read the scripture.

Q: What is the significance of this scripture in our discussion?

A: Many scholars suggest shepherds would not be out in the field in late December due to the cold. Temperatures in Jerusalem at night average around 40 degrees in December.

3) History---The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge in its article on Christmas states: "How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (Dec. 25) following the Saturnalia (Dec. 17-24), and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun'...cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence....The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival."

Q: Why is it not a good idea for Christians to mix pagan worship with the worship of God?

A: Deuteronomy 12:29-32---God does not want to be worshipped the way false pagan gods were worshipped. He has given us the bible to instruct us on how we should worship Him.

Teacher Note: Have a student read the above scripture.

4) History---Christmas pagan survivals...a) Mistletoe was used by ancient pagans because they considered it sacred to the sun due to its supposed miraculous healing power. b) Holly berries were also considered sacred to the sun-god. c) The yule log is the "sun log." "Yule" means "wheel," a pagan symbol of the sun. d) The lighting of candles and fires (we could include the modern invention of lighting here) as a Christian ceremony is a continuation of the pagan custom, encouraging the waning sun-god as he reached the lowest place in the southern skies. (Source for A-D, *The Plain Truth About Christmas*, The Worldwide Church of God). e) Christmas wreaths are connected with the pagan holiday of Yule, marking the winter solstice, which was celebrated by Germanic and Scandinavian peoples.---Source: santasquarters.com.

Teacher Note: Have the student's use their cell phones to find any pagan origins to the Christmas tree. Have them tell the class what they discover.

5) Scripture---Jeremiah 10:1-10---God is greater than any idol that man can create.

Teacher Note: Have a student read the scripture.

Q: Why do you think some people teach this is an example of a Christmas tree?

A: Because of the description of cutting down a tree and decking it with silver and gold, but this is actually about the creation of a false pagan idol for worship.

Q: How could we understand Christmas itself as idolatry?

A: By the great importance, money, time and effort people place on it.

Q: What is idolatry?

A: Worship of idols or excessive devotion to some person or thing.

Q: What is the biggest problem with Christmas?

A: It places great emphasis on something Satan wants us to focus on rather than what God wants us to focus on (His holy days).

6) History---From the Bibliotheca Sacra, volume 12, pages 153-155, "The interchange of presents between friends is alike characteristic of Christmas and Saturnalia, and must have been adopted by Christians from the Pagans, as the admonition of Tertullian plainly shows."

Q: Why do some think we give presents at Christmas for Jesus' birth?

A: Because the wise men brought him gifts. But the wise men brought Him gifts because that was the custom for the birth of a king. They also may have arrived up to two years after his birth. Have someone read Matthew 2:1-16. Note verse 11, Jesus was now a young infant "child" and not a babe in the manger. Note verse 16, when they Magi finally got to Jesus it could have been up to two years after He had been born.

Teacher Note: If you are pressed for time you don't have to include item #6.

Activity (10 minutes): Have the student's role play how they would respond to a friend, family member or stranger in the following circumstances.

Example 1: Someone says "Merry Christmas" to you.

Example 2: Someone asks you what you are getting for Christmas.

Example 3: Someone asks you if you are ready for Christmas.

Example 4: Someone invites you to Christmas dinner.

Teacher Note: Tell the students to play the role as if they don't want to explain their beliefs and then play the role as if you do want to explain your beliefs. Ask them how it felt different. Make sure everyone gets to reverse the roles and change partners. Debrief the class on what they learned from the activity. Make sure the teens understand it's not wrong to eat Christmas dinner at someone's house. In fact it could be an opportunity to witness why you don't celebrate the holiday.

Wrap-Up (2 minutes): Ok let's wrap it up. Who can tell me what our objectives were for this lesson? Yes, to understand why we don't celebrate Christmas. And that is because, why? Right, it is steeped in pagan practices which were used in the worship of false gods. Our second objective? Right to understand why we keep God's holy days. Because those are the days God has asked us to keep and they explain His plan for mankind. The Devil is trying to deceive the

world so he uses Christmas as one of his methods to hide God's true worship days from the world. Any other questions or comments.

Teacher Note: This lesson can probably be done in 45-50 minutes or in two 25 minute sessions. If you do two 25 minute sessions do a short review of what took place in the first session before you start the second session. Also address what is coming in session 2 at the end of session 1.