

## The 12 Days of Christmas

### I. How have the Twelve Days of Christmas been celebrated historically?

- The first day of Christmastide is Christmas Day.
- The second day is Saint Stephen's Day, a day to commemorate the first Christian martyr.
- The third day is the feast of St. John the Apostle.
- Then there's the feast of the Holy Innocents commemorating the slaughter of the Jewish children in Bethlehem when Herod tried to annihilate the Messiah.
- After that is the feast of St. Thomas Becket. Becket was an archbishop of Canterbury who was also martyred.
- Depending on the year, the first Sunday after Christmas is observed which also commemorates King David and others.
- Then December 31st is St. Sylvester Day, and January 1st is the feast of the circumcision of Christ or the Solemnity of Mary depending on your tradition.
- There are various traditions that span the ninth through eleventh Days of Christmas, and then there's Twelfth Night on January 5th also known as the Epiphany which commemorates the wise men finding Jesus. And the Twelfth Day of Christmas comes to an end at nightfall on January 6th.

### II. Why doesn't The Celebration of God encourage you to celebrate the way it's been done historically?

- First, we must acknowledge that the Bible doesn't command that we observe Christmas, let alone spend twelve days doing so. This is one of those holidays that was instituted by men. It's a great idea and totally Christ-honoring when done the right way, but we do have freedom to participate or not.
  - But here's the problem. Many people prefer not to celebrate Christmas because it's supposedly a pagan holiday, and they want to distance themselves the same way people do with Halloween. But we contend that *all true believers* are going to — at one point or another — thank the Father for sending the Son. They're going to thank Jesus for being born so that He could live a perfect life, die a perfect death, and raise again to purchase our redemption and defeat death and hell.
  - If someone isn't praising the Lord for those realities, then they're not born again.
  - Therefore, in a way, everyone observes Christmas . . . even the people who avoid the festivities normally associated with December 25th. The key is, you don't have to celebrate the Incarnation *on* December the 25th, but you're going to at some point or another.
- The other reason The Celebration of God does not encourage you to celebrate the Twelve Days as they've been historically celebrated is that we don't want for anyone to participate in the various feast days of the Catholic church. I'm not suggesting that everything Catholics believe or do is sinful; it's simply that Catholicism not only pollutes the Gospel by removing absolutely vital Truths from Scripture, but it also adds so much in that the Gospel is often unrecognizable.
  - The Celebration of God is just that . . . it's all about God. Now, yes we encourage everyone to celebrate grandparents and parents and friends and family on their birthdays and veterans and the like . . . but the purpose of that celebration is very different.
  - We're celebrating that individual *as part* of our celebration of *God*, not in *substitution* of God. Many of the catholic feasts are focused entirely on the saint in question with very little focus given to God.

- Even the prayers that should be offered to God are — instead — directed at the saint in question. And that should never be. Nowhere in Scripture are we given the idea that praying to dead people is Christ-honoring. In fact, praying is an act of worship, and no one is to be worshipped other than God. Even angels refused man's worship.
- But the other interesting observation is that — in the Scriptures — communing with dead people was always associated with the occult. Deuteronomy 18:10-12
- We believe that the catholic traditions put far too much emphasis on the man or woman instead of giving the worship to God.

### III. How can protestants celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas to God's glory?

- First, we should celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas because God is worth celebrating every day of the year. Twelve is not enough to praise God for the Incarnation, but it's a good start.
- Second, I don't have any problem biblically redeeming pagan festivals, so I really don't have a problem redeeming biblically-untenable festivals either. That means that we can easily observe each of the 12 days in a way that pleases the Lord.
- But third, we have freedom in Christ to observe days that other Christians don't and *not* observe days other Christians do, but only when we do so in genuine faith that God is receiving the honor and glory of our actions, and only if its lining up with Scripture.
  - So, let's start with Scripture, shall we? If you go to [CelebrationOfGod.com](http://CelebrationOfGod.com), click on the holidays tab and select "Christmas," you will find all sorts of great resources, but the main one you need to download is the Christmas Bible Reading. There you will find twelve different readings for each of the twelve days.
  - The Scriptures expand on the early years of Christ, but they go further than that.
  - The traditional twelve days only focus on Jesus' early years even though they celebrate people who lived much later. However, we recognize that Jesus' being born is not the end of the story — in fact — it's not even the most important part of the story. So the passages we're going to read during the Twelve Days cover His early years as well as the beginning of His ministry including key lessons from His teachings from the book of John, and then end with His High Priestly Prayer (right before His betrayal). And each passage calls us to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.
  - Christmas Eve — Luke 2:1-20
  - 1st Day — Matthew 2:1-12
  - 2nd Day — Matthew 2:13-23; Psalm 2
  - 3rd Day — Luke 2:21-40
  - 4th Day — Luke 2:41-52
  - 5th Day — John 1:1-18
  - 6th Day — John 1:19-34
  - 7th Day — John 3:1-21
  - 8th Day — John 3:22-36.
  - 9th Day — John 5:18-24
  - 10th Day — John 8:12-30
  - 11th Day — John 10:1-18
  - 12th Day — John 17:1-26; John 20:30-31
- There were a lot of people that God has used to spread His Word far and wide and accomplish His will on this earth, but we can't imagine a better way of celebrating God on the 12 Days of Christmas than by reading about Him and what He did to set in motion the salvation of man.