

# So You're Not Keeping Christmas?

The halls are decked with boughs and holly; the stockings are hung by the chimney with care. The wistful voice of Tiny Tim mingles with the strains of "Silent Night" as he wishes a blessing on us, every one. All the world seems at peace.

*Except you.*

You, who can no longer in good conscience take part in the singing, party-going, the exchanging of gifts and greeting cards.

There are times you may wish you didn't know what you know.

*But you do know.*

You know about the 4,000-year history of Christmas, about the origins of the Yule log and mistletoe, about the fact that Jesus wasn't born on or anywhere near December 25. Most of all, you know what God says about taking pagan days and dressing them in cloak of sanctity.

And because you know, this can the most miserable season of the year. At no other time do you feel so out of step with the society around.

But *there's a danger* in that.

## Two pitfalls

God opened your mind to understand the truth about Christmas—along with other biblical truths—for a reason. But even though you've been called out, there's still a strong urge *to conform*.

Many recognize the origins of today's Christmas observance, but these people still compromise. "What's the difference?" they ask. Yet it must make some difference—some of them are your hottest antagonists! That you dare act on what you know torments them.

They urge you to compromise—but *you must not* (Romans 12:2)!

Let's say you resist the urge to conform, obeying God instead. That's good. For some, that's even exhilarating. You see, some are nonconformists by nature. It doesn't bother them at all to be out of step with all this world; that lets them feel exclusive and superior. They might even be disappointed if society abolished Christmas tomorrow—they would no longer be unique.

How will they feel in the world tomorrow, when false religious

observances will be wiped out, replaced by God's Holy Days (Zechariah 14:16-19)?

Rather than feel smugly superior to the rest of humanity, we ought to be profoundly sorry that they cannot see and obey the truth at this time—that they even harass us when we do obey.

Note 1 Peter 4:16: "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter."

If we do suffer harassment, even persecution, for not celebrating Christmas, we're warned to avoid another wrong reaction: *shame*.

This was driven home to me one day as I walked my son and his friend home from kindergarten. "What's Santa bringing you Erik?" the friend asked my son.

How would Erik react? This was his first exposure to people his own age who kept Christmas. Would he be awkward and ashamed about being "different"?

"No," Erik answered simply, "We don't celebrate Christmas."

No *conformity*, no *superiority*, but most of all, no *embarrassment*. Children learn from their parents—but this time I learned from him.

In 1 Peter 3:15, we're told, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Never with superiority, never with shame!

## Get In Step with God

Make no mistake. *We must answer for what we do, not only to people who ask why we're different, but also to God, if we deny the truth He's given us* (Matthew 10:33, II Timothy 2:12).

In John 15:18-20, Jesus tells us we're not out of this world, and that we will be persecuted as He was. God's people have always seemed out of step to the society around them. But in reality, *it's the world that's out of step with God!*

God has called us out of this world and all of its false ways. That means resisting the temptation to conform with this world. That also means avoiding the traps of a superior attitude—or an embarrassed, inferior attitude—toward others.