

Culture Wars: Easter vs. Christmas

"Happy Easter"!? ... or "Blessed Resurrection Sunday! Why is it we feel the need to wish someone a happy day in the name of an ancient pagan goddess? (*The name "Easter" originated with the names of an ancient Goddess and God. The Venerable Bede, (672-735 AD), a Christian scholar, first asserted in his book De Ratione Temporum that Easter was named after Eostre (a.k.a. Eastre). She was the Great Mother Goddess of the Saxon people in Northern Europe. Similarly, the "Teutonic dawn goddess of fertility [was] known variously as Ostare, Ostara, Ostern, Eostrā, Eostre, Eostur, Eastrā, Eastur, Austron and Ausos."* 1 Her name was derived from the ancient word for spring: "eastre.") Wouldn't a "blessed Resurrection Sunday"



be a more appropriate Christian greeting? After all, it certainly points to the Savior's resurrection. Let's compare the response of comparing Easter with Christmas. While Christmas is often at the center of an ongoing culture war between believers and non-believers, the Sunday that we celebrate the Resurrection is more or less a pretty much unheralded event. So the question is shouldn't Easter be celebrated with more enthusiasm than Christmas?

There are a number of reasons why Christmas gets top billing over the Resurrection. I believe the truth is everybody can get on board when it's time for the celebration of a cute, cuddly infant's entering into the world. You don't have to be a believer to say, "Merry Christmas." That's because most everybody rejoices in the celebration of a new life in this world, or they can get excited over the visit of an imaginary chimney sweep bearing gifts. On the other hand, the death and resurrection of Jesus is not the kind of thing that appeals to many. It implies and conveys a commitment to the truth. It's like the difference between a birthday party and a funeral.

As I already stated, you don't have to be a believer to put up a Christmas tree, give presents, or send a Christmas card with a picture of you and your dog. On the other hand, to remember Christ's death, you are also obligated then to deal with the resurrection. At that point you are dealing with matters of faith as well. Anyone who says, "Christ is risen!" is making a statement of belief about the Redeemer ... they're saying Jesus is not your average Joe, because to rise from the dead is something only God can do. And the world isn't ready to acknowledge Jesus as God's Son. If you do that, you have to accept all the other things the Scripture says about Jesus and the salvation He has won.

If you're like me, you have a reaction to the world's ongoing attacks on Christmas ... things like you can't put up a manger scene in a public place; you can't have public school children singing Christmas carols or taking a Christmas break. That kind of cultural war happens every year, and the outcome of those battles changes from place to place.

Remember the cultural battle that took place in the city of Frankenmuth a few years ago? My memory is a bit fuzzy, but I recall that for years the City Council there had put up at least one manger scene and many crosses around town. That almost changed when they were threatened with a lawsuit from an individual if they continued the practice. That's where these kinds of battles usually stop. But this time it didn't. The citizens of Frankenmuth flooded the town with crosses. They didn't like being pushed around and told how to witness their faith; citizens displayed crosses in their front yards; storekeepers put them in their storefront windows. They could be seen wherever you looked around town. There may have been more crosses than there were people. I understand that the antagonist eventually gave up and moved away.

We believers can make a personal difference when we take a stand ... either at Christmas or Easter. That's why it would be a great witness to wish folks a 'blessed Resurrection Sunday'. Let's start that next year!!

That's the View from Here

Pastor Bill Winter