

# The Old Paths

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## “Students Talk About Gambling”

Jarrold Jacobs

In the Messenger-Inquirer on Wednesday (12/18/02), the first and second pages of the “D” section were dedicated to reporting on a student panel asked to discuss casino gambling in Daviess county. Nine high school students in all (three boys, six girls) participated in this “panel discussion” with Mark Cooper, the M-I’s education reporter.

The article was quite eye-opening. Several stated that they were not in favor of a casino, yet others stated that they were not sure what to think about it. There were some responses based on relativism and “situation ethics” as they said that it would be up to the individual to determine whether he or she thought it was right or wrong to do. The closest anyone came to actually condemning gambling was Jonathon Webb, a junior at Owensboro High School, who said: “The Bible says gambling is a sin.” He went on to say, “but don’t get me wrong: I don’t go to church every Sunday.” He said he would not encourage anyone in his family to go to a casino, nor would he go.

In the course of the article, some commended casinos as a way to bring money into the Owensboro economy, while several expressed their opposition to gambling if it was “abused” (though only one spoke of a way to prohibit “abuse”). Abuse, though, was not defined for us. As I read this, I thought it would be good for us to consider the truth from the Bible in light of this article about casino gambling.

### **Gambling In Any Form Is Wrong.**

Be it casinos, slot machines, lotteries, cake walks, bingos, raffles, “buying a chance,” etc., gambling is wrong. Yet, it is not because of the reason Mr. Webb from OHS gave. There is not a place in the Bible where it says “Gambling is a sin.” What the Bible tells us is how we can lawfully gain money/possessions in this life. This comes through work (Eph. 4:28), giving of gifts (Eph. 4:28; I Tim. 6:17-18; Acts 20:35), and inheritance (Lk. 15:12). God was silent about men gambling in order to gain money, and when God is silent, we must be silent, too (I Pet. 4:11).

### **The Principle Behind Gambling Is A Sin.**

When we begin to look into gambling, we find the whole concept of gambling being sinful. Stealing is connected with gambling, and we know that stealing from someone else is a sin (Eph. 4:28; Rom. 13:9). Covetousness is the motivation for gambling. Coveting another’s possessions is a sin (Col. 3:5; Rom. 13:9). Many times, in gambling, one attempts to trick his opponent in order to gain his/her possessions. Trying to trick someone out of their money is wrong. These things all happen in the course of gambling.

### **If One Consents To Gamble, Is It A Sin?**

Some of the young people in the article stated that so long as people were “responsible” and “controlled” themselves, then it was OK to gam-

ble.

Often, there are those who reason that since the money was taken from a willing participant, then it is not a sin. Friends, since when does one’s “consent” justify sin and wrongdoing? Just because I think I am “responsible” enough to consent to engage in a sin doesn’t make the sin any less sinful! For example, if two “responsible” people consent to engage in sexual immorality, is it acceptable with God so long as it was by consent and not rape (I Cor. 6:18)? Solomon argued against such things when he said, “*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof*” (Prov. 1:10-19). Evidently, it was understood even in Old Testament days that one consenting to a sin did not justify it! Let us learn that lesson, too!

### **Conclusion**

Friends, such newspaper articles disturb me because Mr. Cooper was talking to our youth, and this is their understanding of sinful behavior. Parents, what are we teaching our children day-by-day? Do they know truth from error? “*Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*” (Lk. 12:15).

## Even If Jesus Was Born On December 25<sup>th</sup>

Larry Ray Hafley, Baytown, TX

**S**cholars generally agree that Jesus was not born in December, let alone on December 25<sup>th</sup>. However, even if he had been born on that day, the celebration of his birthday would be without scriptural authority (Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Jn. 9).

So, Even If Jesus Was Born On December 25<sup>th</sup>:

1) Jesus never authorized the observance of his birth. Since he told the apostles the things he wanted us to "observe," and since we may neither add nor subtract from the things which he "commanded," we may not commemorate his birth (Matt. 28:20; Cf. 7:21-23; 15:8, 9; Acts 15:24; 1 Cor. 4:6, 17; 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Jn. 9). Even though we might be able to point to a specific date and say, "This is the day on which Jesus was born," it would not authorize us to have a special day of worship regarding it.

2) The apostles did not honor Jesus on his birthday. We are to follow the apostles as they followed Christ and keep the ordinances as he gave to them to deliver to us (Lk. 10:16; 1 Cor. 4:6, 17; 11:2, 23; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; 2 Thess. 3:4). Has any one ever read a passage which shows that the apostles gave attention to the day Jesus was born? No; therefore, if Jesus was born on December 25<sup>th</sup>, that fact alone would not authorize us to act (Acts 15:24).

3) New Testament churches did not have special services celebrat-

ing the Savior's birth. The apostle Paul spoke of how that the scriptural work and zeal of some local churches, as they acted in accordance with apostolic teaching, was an example to others (2 Cor. 9:2; 1 Thess. 1:8). Do we ever read where any first century churches noted the birth of Jesus? Did they ever have special worship services celebrating the wonderful fact that Jesus was born of the blessed virgin Mary in Bethlehem? No, they never did.

This is remarkable when we consider that the churches at Jerusalem and Colosse were very diligent in living and laboring in strict accordance with "the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42; Col. 2:4-7). Since they were in "order" and "in the apostles' doctrine," does it not seem strange that such a prominent thing as "Christmas" was never mentioned as being part of the life and work of New Testament churches?

4) There is no divine command, no apostolic example, nor any hint that Christians are to honor the birth of Jesus. Jesus severely criticized those who worshiped him in accordance with human traditions (Matt. 15:8, 9). He did not wish to be praised with ordinances invented by men, no matter how well intentioned they were (Matt. 7:21-27; Lk. 6:46; 2 Jn. 9; Cf. Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6).

### Conclusion

As Christians, we rejoice that Christ was born, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to suffer and die for us (Jn. 3:16). The word of God focuses our eyes, not upon the manger, but upon the cross (Gal. 6:14). Thus, while we may enjoy certain national, social and seasonal holiday customs during what is called, "Christmas," let us never be diverted from the true worship of him who was born to die for us (Jn. 4:24; 1 Jn. 4:14).

**Thought:** "When the watchman on the wall can no longer recognize the enemy, the city is as good as lost!"

God calls for His people to be watchmen (Isa. 62:6-7). The watchman is responsible for watching out for the enemy (Satan, I Pet. 5:8) and warning God's people against the advances of the enemy (Col. 1:28). Therefore, the city is lost when the watchman is either too ignorant, or too rebellious to recognize Satan, and warn Christians of his devices (II Cor. 2:11).

Let us examine ourselves. Perhaps some of us need to get back on the wall and get to watching for the enemy again! If you have failed in your duty in 2002, repent today and make your life right with God before 2003.

- Jarrod Jacobs

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**"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16)**