

Should Christians Actually Be Offended by 'X-Mas'?

As each Christmas season arrives in the U.S., our culture faces an ever-evolving posture toward embracing the religious roots of the holiday. While many businesses and organizations are slowly migrating away from the use of the word *Christmas* in public and commercial communications, there are still plenty that continue to acknowledge the traditional title.

However, one alternative title, "Xmas," still sparks controversy. The use of "Xmas" is often described by Christians as culture's continued attempt to sanitize Christmas of its faith-filled meaning. To remove "Christ" from the title completely seems to fit this narrative, but a quick look at history clearly reveals that "Xmas" isn't a removal of Christ at all. It's the opposite.

First, we observe the meaning of the letter "X." In Greek the word "Christos" meaning Christ is *Χριστός*. You'll notice the "X" (chi in Greek) is the first letter of this word.

Next, we'll explore how *Χριστός* became abbreviated to simply "X." The shorthand for Christ became popularized in the early fourth century by Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, according to Vox. Historians account in a battle against Maxentius, Constantine was given a vision from God to create a military banner bearing the first two letters of Christ (chi and rho), thus becoming the abbreviation of Jesus Christ.

Thus leading to our modern-day use of Xmas, shorthand for the same meaning, Christ.

Many scholars record that Xmas first appeared in 1021 when a scribe shortened Christmas to Xmas in an effort to maximize space printing on expensive parchment paper. It then began to fold into poetry dating back to 1801 by Samuel Taylor

Coleridge. The term began to stick in the vernacular, morphing into use as a verb even such as “xmassing” as recorded in Punch magazine, according to The Guardian.

Fast forward to today, the misunderstanding of the use of Xmas is widely mixed amongst Christians. While there are honest concerns about the steady secularization of the sacred meaning of Christmas, Xmas should not be a target. In fact, even when people unknowingly tout Xmas as non-Christian, it serves as a fun history lesson as to the actual meaning.

Now that we understand this, as Christians, let’s leave the offense for bigger matters of the world. {eoa}

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