

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

- Week of December 11, 2022 -

Sunday Morning Service	28
Sunday Evening Service	16
Wednesday Eve., 12/14/22 Service	13

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

- Week of December 11, 2022 -

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings	\$ 4,742.90
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 12/11/22:	\$ 4,742.90

- Week of December 4, 2022 -

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings	\$ 1,849.22
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 12/04/22:	\$ 1,849.22

- Week of November 27, 2022 -

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings	\$ 1,254.90
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 11/27/22:	\$ 1,254.90

- Week of November 20, 2022 -

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings	\$ 1,572.90
Lighting for church street sign	\$ 25.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 11/20/22:	\$ 1,597.90

- Week of November 13, 2022 -

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings	\$ 1,967.75
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 11/13/22:	\$ 1,967.75

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed for church operating expenses EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00



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WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. Admit that you are a sinner.
2. Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.
3. Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.
4. You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).
5. By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, Who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.



THANK YOU For Your Continued Faithfulness In Giving!

During the early part this pandemic, we were unable to meet in the church-house. But - that did not mean that the expenses of having a church-house were suspended. We still had bills to pay - electricity, gas, water, trash pickup, phone, internet, facility insurance, copier lease, office supplies, etc., and, praise the Lord, His people kept praying, watching online, & supporting their church with their giving.

Sadly, some people only give when they are in attendance at church - sort of like paying for "services rendered" - but the truth is that they are robbing **THEMSELVES** of God's blessings when they withhold their tithes and offerings and only give when they are here (see Malachi 3:10). Thankfully, most of our people have remained faithful, in so many ways, during this crisis, including financially.

WE HAVE 3 WAYS YOU CAN GIVE:

1. **By mail** - 23 East Wells Blvd., Sapulpa, OK 74066
2. **Drop it off** - call the Church Office to arrange it. 224-1924
3. **Online** - Go to the link below and give electronically:

<https://tithe.ly/give?c=433047>

**WE ARE GLAD WE CAN NOW GATHER TOGETHER TO PRAISE GOD & STUDY HIS WORD TOGETHER IN THE CHURCH-HOUSE!
YOUR FAITHFUL AND GENEROUS GIFTS WILL HELP US KEEP UP WITH THE BILLS AND CONTINUE OUR RENEWED OUTREACH EFFORTS!**

Church Directory

Todd W. White	Pastor
Lois Mae Floyd	Pianist/ Organist
Mickie Shatwell	Evening Pianist
Derek Quinnelly	Greeter
Larry & Mary Byars	Outreach
Bertha Segebarrt	Custodian
GinaMarie Shufelt	Flowers
Seth White	Sound/Video

SOUTH HEIGHTS BAPTIST'S WEEKLY REMINDER

Volume XXVIII

December 18 2022

Number 50



The Meaning of Christmas

by Dr. Robert G. Lee (1886-1978)

"The dayspring from on high hath visited us" (Luke 1:78).

The birth of a little Child the Christian world at this season celebrates. Christmas Day is a holy and happy day when we commemorate the coming of God's Son into the world—the incarnation of God by way of the virgin birth. Never too happily can we sing. Never too eagerly can we ring the bells. Never with exaggeration can we express the Christmas benediction: *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).*

With the coming of the *"dayspring from on high,"* morning broke upon the world's darkness—in Bethlehem—while men and women, bruised and bleeding, were in a darkness unlighted by flickering philosophical tapers and sputtering Judaistic lamps.

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isa. 9:6). This prediction—most clear in application, most glorious in content, most consolatory in design, most gracious in purpose—points us to the time when God's Son assumed our nature, entering the world in circumstances of deepest humiliation.

With every detail of the Christmas story we are familiar: Herod of Judah, the last of Judah's kings; Israel, breathing her hope of Messiah's advent; Bethlehem, small and white upon its mountain slopes where Heaven put out its brightest star; Cyrenius, publishing the order of the emperor; the star, seen in faraway Persia by wise men of the East who were accustomed to study the heavens and who mounted their camels and journeyed westward over the desert to Jerusalem; the angels; the shepherds; the Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; the gifts from the wise men of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

What is the meaning, we ask, of Christmas to the world?

I. Christ Is A Manifestation

Though Christmas is the celebration of the advent of Christ into the world by human birth, nobody should believe that Christmas marks the beginning of Christ, because the Son who rested on the bosom and fed at the breast of the virgin Mary for a little while had, before this world was, rested on the bosom of the Father—before *"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4).* Jesus had glory with God before the world was (John 17:5).

Jesus Himself said, *"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).*

His incarnation was literally an "enfleshment"—God assumed a living, bodily form. The Child of Mary was of the Holy Ghost. The power of the Highest overshadowed her. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, that body was formed within her—a body that partook of sin of neither man nor woman. And that body was God.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3:16).

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3).

(continued inside)

The apostle Peter speaks of Christ who *“hath once suffered for sins”* and who was *“put to death in the flesh” (I Pet. 3:18)*. God’s “enfleshment” in Christ means that the preexistent Christ was embodied in human flesh, demonstrated in human life, exemplified in human action, crystallized in human form. That Child Jesus was the Saviour in miniature, in whom, without restriction of essence or suppression of functions, dwelt *“all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9)*.

Christ was God manifest in the flesh—and His every muscle was a pulley divinely swung; His every nerve, divine handwriting; His every bone, divine sculpture. Christ who shares that plurality of deity expressed in the story of creation was “made flesh” and “made of a woman.”

II. Christmas Means A Manger

Coldly the world, which later cruelly thrust Jesus out on the point of a spear, received Jesus on a pallet of manger straw. Messiah’s birth chamber was a stable—not a palace, not a human habitation.

What abasement! How wonderful for us that the Lord of Glory was so humbled and abased for us, the vile and sinful progeny of Adam. Thinking of Christ stripping Himself of His robes and roles of glory, Flavel said, *“If the sun had been turned into a wandering atom, if the most glorious angel in heaven had changed into a fly, it had been nothing to the abasement of the Lord of Glory.”*

Born as the very poorest are born, without attendants, He was the One through whom God worked and works sublimities without display.

Listen at the manger! You will hear the voices of Heaven’s singers.

Look upon the manger! You will see the Christ who came down from the heights of deity to the depths of humanity, down from Heaven’s honors to earth’s humiliation, down from Heaven’s coronations to earth’s curses, down from Heaven’s delights to earth’s defamations, down from the glory place to the gory place, down from Heaven’s riches to earth’s poverty.

At the manger, we understand the apostle’s words: *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Cor. 8:9)*.

III. Christmas Means A Marking

The lowly birthplace of Jesus was marked by a star.

“When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy” (Matt. 2:9,10)

That star marking the house to which the wise men from the East came testifies that the fullness of time had come, that the prophecies were accomplished, that He who had a name *“as ointment poured forth”* had come with a coming that stirred earth and Heaven, the sea and the dry land. For no other child did the heavens assume a new star. For no other child did wise men

come from the East “to worship him” (Matt. 2:2). For no other child did angels descend from glory. For no other child did Heaven and earth bear witness—being marked by prophecy and a star.

But I mean something else by the marking. What mean I? I mean that this Christ, coming into the world by virgin womb, small enough to be held in a woman’s two hands and weak enough to feed at a woman’s breast, cradled in a manger, has Christianized the calendar of the world.

This Jesus, whom neither calendars nor clocks nor contemporary historians took note of, has bent the datelines of all nations around His lowly cradle. Today, as through all the days of all the years the world over, the dates on newspapers printed, the dates on checks drawn, the dates on deeds recorded, the dates on money coined or spent, the dates on cornerstones placed, the dates on monuments erected, the dates on documents filed, the dates on letters written, do testify.

The Greeks tried to date time from their Olympiads.

The Romans tried to date time from the founding of their imperial city.

Justinian tried to date time from the tax levies he made.

Laplace tried to date time from conjunctions of certain planets.

The French Revolutionists tried to date time from the year one of their revolution.

And all failed—miserably, woefully. But what the Jews could not do, what the Greeks could not do, what the Romans could not do, what the French could not do in the matter of dating time, *Jesus did gloriously!* Before He came, the ages awaited Him. Since He came, the ages rise out of Him.

IV. Christmas Means Music

“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them” (Luke 2:20).

As the sun went down in the western sea that day, the stars came out, and the Messiah’s star shone bright. As the temple shepherds watched their flocks by night, in the midst of the starlit silence appeared a glory—and a voice.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:8–11).

The shepherds, filled with awe at the shining presence and the wondrous words, did not speak. Moving not, they gazed. And then suddenly, as they looked, the single messenger became a choir, and the night echoed with divinest music.

“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they

made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds” (Luke 2:16–18).

As there was music long ago when “upon the midnight clear” came “that glorious song of old,” so still at Christmas there is music.

*Still thro’ the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heav’nly music floats
O’er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lonely plains
They bend on hov’ring wing,
And ever o’er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.*

- Edmund H. Sears

Let us listen to the Christmas music, vocal and instrumental, and remember that the Christian life is music in harmony with the will of God. Let us never forget that the centuries become, as it were, a mighty choir lifting their increasing hallelujahs to Christ’s name. Higher and even higher rises their sublime refrain.

But, with all the Christmas joy, the Christmas greetings, the Christmas merrymaking, and though many now rejoice because the true Light shineth, for some.

V. Christmas Means Mourning

Related tragically are these verses:

“When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not” (Matt. 2:3,16–18).

So, though not for the same cause, we find amid the glad ones whom we greet at Christmas, the sad ones. There are those who rejoice. There are those who weep. Some mourn the loss of loved ones.

While some laugh beneath the mistletoe, some grieve beside coffins or over graves.

While some faces are as bright as fires aglow on home hearthstones, some faces are shadowed with intangible gloom.

While some rejoice and are grateful for abounding health, some pine mournfully because of wasted, disease-smitten bodies.

And some have not joy because they have not the righteousness which Christ, as Saviour, first imputes and then imparts.

And some have not joyful peace because they know not the peace which Jesus, who was born to save His people from their sins, makes and then bestows.

Some have not joy because they have not learned in the light of the “dayspring from on high” their sinfulness and have not returned to Him for salvation.

Some find Christmas a time of mourning because they have no calm in their conscience. The heavenly wind has not blown upon them amid life’s fretful fevers.

So many miss the joy because they set not their feet in the path of the just, which *“shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18)*. Yes, Christmas for many means mourning.

VI. Christmas Means Meeting

In the birth of Jesus, Heaven and earth meet. Coleridge, speaking of philosophy, said: “In wonder all philosophy began, in wonder all philosophy ends, and admiration fills up the interspace.” Thinking of Jesus’ natal night, of Bethlehem, of the angels, of the inn in which there was no room for the Prince of Glory, of the cattle stall in which He was born, of the fact that He was God held in a woman’s arms, of those who *“wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds” (Luke 2:18)*, we say, in the words of Shakespeare: “O wonderful, wonderful, and most wonderful wonderful! and yet again wonderful.”

Heaven and earth meet. Shepherds served and angels sang. We read of “shepherds abiding in the field,” “the angel of the Lord” and “a multitude of the heavenly host.” The angels went back to Heaven. The shepherds went to Bethlehem. Heaven and earth were in touch, and Heaven took the initiative. The candle did not reach forth to the sun; the sun stooped to the candle. The glowworm did not reach up to the stars; the star stooped to touch the glowworm. Humanity did not seek God; God sought humanity. *“He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all” (John 3:31)*.

He who is from Heaven and is above all is Heaven’s Bread for earth’s hunger, Heaven’s Light for earth’s darkness, Heaven’s Grace for earth’s guilt, Heaven’s Life for earth’s death.

And during the days of His flesh on earth, this Christ never lifted a finger, never took a step, never breathed a word to injure any. He welcomed to His love the most neglected of the outcast, the poorest of the poor, the saddest of the sad, the vilest of the vile, inviting them to His holy and happy home in Heaven.

But—’tis sad, ’tis true—

VII. Christmas Means A Marring

I mean by “marring” that men mar the beauty of Christmas by riotous living rather than by reverence of the holy realities which the Christmas season brings to mind. Instead of worship, wickedness; instead of prayer, perversity; instead of devotion, drunkenness; instead of spiritual delight, carnal dancing; instead of expressions of gratitude, utterances of profane and vulgar thoughts; instead of peace, Mars tying crepe to many doorknobs; instead of consecration, carnality and love, by hellish alchemy, changed into lust; instead of hands handling the Bible, hands holding booze bottles; instead of gratitude, greed and grab and get.

As incongruous as chunks of ice for pillows, as rattlesnakes on playgrounds, are many things we see and hear at Christmastime. So many things people do and rejoice in at Christmas season are as man's mean paint on God's fair lilies, as the stupidity of vandals in an art gallery.

Yes, poor understanding have many of the meaning of Christmas. At Christmastime we should remember that *“the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11,12).*

Last of all,

VIII. Christmas Means The Master

This Christ whom the disciples called Master is He who, in eternity, rested on the bosom of the Father without a mother, and in time rested on the bosom of a mother without a father—Son of Man and Son of God, just as old as His Heavenly Father and ages older than His earthly mother. He who was in the manger later mastered disease into health, blindness into sight, deafness into hearing, lameness into suppleness and strength of muscles, leprosy into cleanness, storms into calm, scarcity of bread into food plenteous, dumbness into speech, death into life and grace into resurrection glory.

He mastered sin, Satan, suffering, death, the grave and Hell. And through Him we can be more than conquerors, mastering all things that mar proper observance of Christmas, mastering the mind so that it thinks God's thoughts after Him, mastering Satan by resistance until he flees from us, mastering our bodies until we shall be *“always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (II Cor. 4:10)* to the glory of Him who *“being in the form of God...made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6–8).*

At this Christmas season, every heart ought to say, *“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (II Cor. 9:15).* You did not ask God for this gift; it was freely bestowed.

At this Christmas season, will you receive presents from earthly friends and reject the gift of God? Base ingratitude! You can commit no greater sin than that of rejecting Jesus Christ. Everything you ever did fades into insignificance in the face of your refusal of the gift of God. Confess your utter worthlessness and simply accept the Lord Jesus Christ, God's “unspeakable gift.”

At this Christmas season, we may not bring Him as costly a present as the Magi brought, but we can bring to His feet and cradle the frankincense of our joy, the pearls of our tears, the kiss of our love, the prostration of our worship; we can move someone to faith in Him, and give testimony that Jesus, our Saviour, our Lord, is Son of Man without sin, Son of God with power and glory, whose name is ceaseless music at the throne which overlooks the world. ■



Dr. John R. Rice
1895–1980

Should A Christian Observe Christmas?

by the late Dr. John R. Rice

“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks” (Romans 14:5–6).

I love the Christmas season. I find great joy in preaching on the Christmas themes of the angels, the shepherds, the manger, the virgin birth, and the wise men. I get a great thrill when I hear Christmas carols. I love the gathering together of loved ones, the giving of gifts. And I rejoice to be remembered by those I love.

Perhaps my own feeling is colored by the fact that for many years I have been away from home most of the year, but at the Christmas season I can be with my family.

How sad that many do not enjoy Christmas! Even some devoted Christians feel sour and are cantankerous and full of objections about the season. To you I would say in the words of Scripture—if you regard the day, regard it unto the Lord. And if you do not regard the day, then be sure you act Christian about it. Let nobody judge or criticize others for an honest, worshipful, spiritual and loving attitude about Christmas.

SOME OBJECTIONS ABOUT CHRISTMAS ANSWERED

1. “December 25 Is Not Really Christ's Birthday”

The Bible does not tell us exactly when Christ was born, and there are no other trustworthy sources from which we can learn the time. Therefore, some think it wrong to observe Christmas.

I know a little girl who was born on February 29—leap year. Now, is it wrong for her to observe her birthday on February 28 when there is no leap year? In other words, is it wrong for her or others to observe her birthday anytime except leap year? The precise date—February 29—is not the important factor, but that another year has gone by and the little girl has grown a year older; and that fact should be recognized by loved ones.

Would you say it is wrong to observe Thanksgiving on a certain Thursday in November since not all our blessings have come on that day? Or would it be wrong to set a more convenient day if all agreed on a national day of thanksgiving? Whatever the day, it is still right to have a time when we publicly thank God and as a nation officially express our gratitude to the Father of

Mercies for all His bounty, for all His goodness and for all His blessings. The important thing is not the day of the calendar on which we do it, but the fact that we give praise to the One who loadeth us with benefits.

Although many scholars do not believe that Jesus was born on December 25, it could still be the date on which the angels announced His birth. We love the dear Lord Jesus. We want everyone to remember His birth. We want to teach our children about the Babe in the manger, about the wise men from the East who came to worship Him, about the angel's announcement to Mary, about the angel chorus that told the shepherds of His birth. And December 25 is as good a day for that as any other day. It is not wrong to remember the birth of Christ on a day which is as close as we can come to His birthday.

2. “Christmas Means Only ‘Christ's Mass’—a Catholic Holiday”

We are told that the name of Christmas comes from “Christ's Mass,” that it was instituted by Catholics and therefore good Protestants ought not to observe it.

That objection seems a little foolish. Nearly all the names we have, we inherited from the heathen. Many cities, towns, counties and rivers in America have Indian names. But when we see the Susquehanna River or read of Shawnee, Oklahoma or Comanche, Texas, we are not thinking about the Indians. And the names have no connotation of heathendom. Names mean what they mean, no matter what the origin.

Sometimes Seventh-day Adventists make much of the fact that the name of our day “Sunday” comes from the worship of the sun. I reply that their “Saturday” is named from the god Saturn. But no one has reference to the sun when he uses the word “Sunday” or when he worships on Sunday; and no one has any reference to the god Saturn when he works or serves on Saturday.

So it seems foolish to make an artificial distinction when none exists in the minds of people who observe Christmas.

January was named for the Roman god Janus. Are Christians, therefore, wrong to call the month by that name? To every sensible person, Christmas means simply Christmas, not some kind of mass. Catholics may observe it with a mass, but Protestants do not. It will be good to keep these things in mind.

3. “Christmas Was a Former Heathen Holiday”

It is true that before the birth of Christ, December 25 was a pagan holiday. The Encyclopedia Britannica says this date was a “Mithraic feast day” to celebrate the unconquered Son of Philocalus.

Evidently many new converts were tempted to keep the pagan feast celebrated on December 25. Possibly it was to counteract this pagan influence that Christian leaders decided to observe this day as “Christmas”, which means “Christ-sent,” hoping this would help new converts resist the temptation of partaking in the pagan feast. (Following the same reasoning, many churches have a special banquet and program for high school seniors on the

night of the annual senior prom.)

At any rate, the celebration of Christmas is definitely not a continuation of a pagan custom. It is a unique Christian holiday to counteract the influence of a pagan holiday. Pagans did something on every day, and we cannot do away with all the days they used, whether for worship or for ceremonies about sowing or reaping or about the solstices or the new moons. We have the same sun heathens worshiped, and we benefit from its rising and setting, but we do not have the heathen ceremonies about that.

In 1936, I held a blessed revival campaign in the Binghamton Theatre in Binghamton, New York, sponsored by eight churches. The fact that in this theatre people had seen lewd movies or burlesque shows or legitimate theatre productions did not change the fact that now the building was used for the glory of God and souls were saved.

I myself am under new management too. Once the Devil lived within; now Jesus Christ does. So if heathens used December 25 for idolatry, why should Christians not use it now to honor Jesus Christ and His birth? Whatever day we set aside to honor Christ, it will be a day somebody else has used for bad purposes.

But now all the days belong to Christ and none to heathen gods. No Christian should be grieved if we think about the birth of Christ on December 25. Is that a worse sin than working to make money on that day? Why should anybody object if we sing Christmas carols, have a happy celebration with a feast and go over the Bible story of His birth and teach it to our children on Christmas Day? We would not honor God more by having less Scripture, less singing, less of the spirit of giving and less manifestation of love for others. All the days belong to Christ, and December 25 should be used to honor Him too.

4. “Christmas Trees and Decorations Are an Abomination”

Many people believe Jeremiah 10:1–4 is talking about Christmas trees and that therefore it is a sin to put one up. Notice verses 3 and 4:

“For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.”

This is a description of an idol made of wood and covered with silver and gold. Notice that God tells Israel not to be afraid of these idols because *“they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good” (vs. 5).*

As a matter of fact, the Christmas tree has a distinctive Christian origin. In the eighth century an English missionary named Boniface went to Germany to preach Christ. The Germans, at that time, were heathen and worshiped idols. One of their objects of worship was the oak tree. But Boniface told them God was more like the evergreen tree which did not lose its leaves and appear to be dead in the winter.

So gradually, as people were converted to Christ, the evergreen



tree became a symbol of the eternal God in whom they had learned to trust. Eventually the evergreen tree was used for decoration at the Christmas feast. Because God had shown His love to us through the gift of His Son, it became customary for Christians to give gifts to those whom they loved at Christmastime.

The decorations on a Christmas tree could not possibly be called heathen nor have any idolatrous significance. Who thinks that heathens worshiped their gods with paper chains? that popcorn on a string is a form of idolatry? that electric lights on it for the joy of little children to brighten the home are sinful?

I love Christmas and its decorations, which are but an expression of joy in my heart as I think how God became man, how the Creator became a Babe, how *“though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes he became poor, that [we] through his poverty might be rich” (II Cor. 8:9).*

It is sad that the world as a whole does leave Christ out of Christmas. But for those of us who love the Lord, it can be a blessed time of fun and feasting and fellowship.

5. “There Is Too Much Revelry During the Christmas Holidays”

It is true that many do not honor Jesus Christ at Christmas. Some drink more liquor during Christmastime than at any other time. That is a sin. Many business people think of Christmas only as a time to make money. In this they are wrong. Sometimes even Christians lie about Santa Claus and deceive little children with a heathen legend when they could tell about the dear Lord Jesus. That is wicked. Deceit is the poorest possible way to honor the birth of our Lord.

I do not believe in having a Santa Claus at Sunday school or in the church service. Certainly to deceive little ones with a lie is a sin. No Christian ought to condone it. The truth is so much better than a lie. We should tell them how the dear Lord came into the world to save sinners.

Yes, people often dishonor God at Christmas. I am sorry they do. I hope you will not grieve God by such a sin. But we should not turn Christmas over to Satan and wicked people because some misuse the Christmas season.

Should we abandon Sunday because it is often misused?

On the Lord’s Day there is more drinking, more revelry, than on any other day of the week. Should Christians, therefore, count the Lord’s Day the Devil’s day and give it up? Certainly not.

A great many teach that baptism is essential to salvation. They give more honor to the water than to the blood. That is wrong. But should we, therefore, disobey Jesus Christ about baptism because some others have overstressed baptism and made it a false doctrine?

The second coming has been a greatly abused and perverted doctrine with many. False cults have greatly perverted the doctrine of Christ’s coming. People set dates. They speculate on signs. Should the rest of us Bible Christians, then, ignore the clear

Bible doctrine of Christ’s imminent return because the doctrine has been abused? Certainly not.

Nor should we ignore the Bible doctrine of the fullness of the Spirit just because many associate it with talking in tongues and with sinless perfection.

Just so—we would be very foolish to turn Christmas over to Satan and worldlings. If the world has a Christmas of revelry, let us make it a day of love and a time of honoring Christ. Let us make much of the Christmas story, of Christmas carols and Christmas love and fellowship.

Do other people make giving gifts a mere form? Well, it does not need to be so for Christians. We can give gifts that really express our love. We can make gifts the response of an honest heart. We can send greetings with Scripture verses and with holy admonitions.

Is it wrong to have a day of rejoicing? Is it wrong to feast and to send portions to others? No indeed.

When, under Nehemiah, the remnant of Israel had gone back to the Land of Promise from the captivity in Babylon and the Law was read and explained, the people wept. It was not a time for weeping, but a time for rejoicing. The wall of Jerusalem had been rebuilt, the gates had been hung, the city had been restored as the city of God, and the worship had begun.

Let us listen to the plain commands of the Lord in such a case, as given in Nehemiah 8:9,10:

“And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

And we are glad to learn in verse 12:

“And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.”

If Israelites would honor God by having a day of joy and feasting and of sending portions to others because the wall was rebuilt, the gates were set up, and the worship was established, then we today do well to have a day to rejoice over the birth of the Saviour and to send portions to one another and to make merry with spiritual joy.

I feel nearer to God at Christmas than at any other time. I seem to love the Word of God more at Christmas, when we read and quote it again and again. I like the time as a good excuse to get into people’s hearts and win them to Christ. And many have been saved because I brought a Christmas message or urged sinners to accept God’s great Christmas Gift.

Let us have, then, a happy Christmas and make Christ supreme

on this day which we remember in honor of His birth!

6. “Is It Proper to Give Gifts to Others on Christ’s Birthday?”

Certainly Christ should be first. But then He wants and deserves first place on every other day also! Giving should honor Christ, and certainly we should give ourselves and all we have to Him. But giving gifts to others is also a proper way to honor the Lord, according to Bible example and teaching.

At the feast of Purim, a feast to the Lord celebrating the great deliverance God gave the Jews in answer to the prayers of Mordecai and Esther and other devout Jews when wicked Haman planned to exterminate them, Jews were taught *“that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor” (Esther 9:22).*

Again, when the Jewish remnant who returned from the captivity began to mourn on a holy day as they met to hear the reading of the Law, they were instructed, *“Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord” (Neh. 8:10).* So they returned home for feasting and sending gifts.

So giving gifts, if it be done in the right spirit and motive, honors God on special days set apart for Him.

Remember that God does not need our material things except as He wants them for other people. So under some circumstances giving to others may be as pleasing to Him as giving to pastors and missionaries. We should take care to give in Jesus’ name, remembering specially the poor at Christmas. But the right kind of giving to others is certainly fitting on Christmas.

When the rich young ruler wanted to be perfect, he was instructed to give his property to the poor, not to Jesus (Matt. 19:21); when Zacchaeus was converted, he was led to say. *“The half of my goods I give to the poor” (Luke 19:8).* That pleased Jesus very much.

Jesus said that He would reward everyone who gave a cup of cold water in His name. He also said, *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).*

So giving to others must please Christ very much, if it is done in loving thought toward Him and in His name. Certainly we should give to missions, to the poor and also to loved ones and relatives at Christmas. But be sure your motives are right.

7. “Should Christians Tell Their Children There Is a Santa Claus?”

Certainly not! Lying and deceit are wicked. Lying on Christmas is as great a sin as lying on any other day. It is shameful that Sunday schools often choose to teach a lying fable at Christmastime instead of teaching the marvelous true Christmas stories about the Baby in the manger, the shepherds in the field, the angel’s announcement of a Saviour born, the heavenly chorus and the wise men from the East. The story of the virgin-born Saviour is sweeter than any lie or fable invented by

heathen people and spread by non-Christians.

I remember the sad, sad day when I, five years old, found that my father and mother and kin people had deceived me about Santa Claus—or Saint Nicholas. I was ashamed. I had been victimized. Those I trusted more than anybody else on earth, devout Christians, had lied. I wondered if other things they said were not true either. So Christmas was something of a mockery to me for years until I began to learn the sweetness of a Christmas centered about the birth of Christ.

Lying is wicked, is plainly forbidden in the Bible and is certain to have bad results. And the lie about Santa Claus is especially hurtful in that it crowds out interest in Christ Himself. The Lord Jesus, in many so-called Christian homes, is crowded out by the old, fabled gentleman who is always seen on whiskey ads at this season of the year.

Parents should always tell the truth. My own children were happier about Christmas than those children who have known Christmas as the celebration of a lie.

8. “What About ‘Xmas’?”

Many people distribute leaflets urging us to “keep Christ in Christmas.” In these tracts they sometimes attack the use of “Xmas” as an abbreviation of Christmas. X, they say, is a symbol for an unknown quantity, and this is a devious device of the Devil to remove the name of Christ from Christmas.

While I personally feel it best not to use the abbreviated word “Xmas,” it was not a deliberate attempt—at least at first—to “take Christ out of Christmas.” Actually, in the Greek language a large letter similar to an X stood for the letters CH, and thus for Christ. Originally, then, Xmas was Christmas.

Be that as it may, I am strongly in favor of putting “Christ back in Christmas,” and I never use the abbreviated “Xmas.” ■

GIFTS OF THE MODERN WISE MEN



“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” -Romans 1:22