

## Christmas and the Bible

- Allen Dvorak -

Before our Thanksgiving dinners were cold, local merchants were already telling us what our family members wanted as gifts for Christmas. Many businesses and churches have already had their Christmas parties. In the midst of all this buying, giving and "ho-ho-ho-ing," someone can be counted on to say, "We need to get away from all this crass commercialism and put Christ back into Christmas!"

Really? It may come as a shock to some to learn that the Bible says nothing about Christmas! The Bible does tell of the birth of Jesus, but nowhere mentions "Christmas" nor does it tell us how to celebrate this day which has become a beehive of religious activity. We don't even know when exactly Jesus was born. How did the religious holiday Christmas get started?

If the origin of Christmas is not of God, then it must be of man. Prior to the New Testament period, both the Greeks and Romans celebrated religious holidays on or near December 25th. The Greeks worshipped the sun-god "Sol" on December 25th; the Romans celebrated the Feast of Saturnalia from December 17-24, a revelry which involved merry-making, the giving of gifts and sexual immorality. When Christianity was legalized in A.D. 313, many pagans began members, but they wanted to retain the idolatrous festivals they had previously celebrated. In A. D. 354, Liberius, bishop of Rome, ordered that December 25th be adopted as the day for celebrating the birth of Christ. Had Liberius somehow discovered the actual day of Jesus' birth? Collier's Encyclopedia comments, "The indications are that the church in this way grasped the opportunity to turn the people away from a purely pagan observance of the winter solstice to a day of adoration of Christ the Lord." The truth is that the digressive church of the 4th century turned these pagan festivals into a celebration of Christ's birth. Not everyone agreed on December 25th, however; January 6th (a discrepancy which gave rise to the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas") and March 25th were two other dates used. While the Scriptures do not tell the precise day/date on which Jesus was born, they do indicate that the shepherds were in the fields with their sheep, a fact which would have been unusual in December in Palestine.

But what will it hurt if we go ahead and celebrate Christmas as the birthday of Christ? After all, we don't know for sure that he wasn't born on that day. Actually, knowing the exact date is not the issue. The issue is whether we have any Biblical authority for adding to the worship God has outlined for His saints in the Scriptures. We are told that the Scriptures are complete (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and that it is wrong to "go beyond" the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). God has given us a memorial to celebrate and even specific instructions as to how to observe that memorial. Christians are to remember the death of Christ through a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper.

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Better than understanding God is trusting Him.

### News & Notes

**SYMPATHY:** To Mary Helen Riley and family at the passing of her sister, Opal Thomas who died due to a house fire in Wheeling. God bless and comfort this family.

**CARE & SHARE BEARS:** Canceled this Tuesday, Dec. 25th and the following Tuesday, Jan. 1st. Work will resume Tuesday, Jan. 8th.

**NEW YEAR'S EVE GATHERING:** Monday, Dec. 31st, 6:00 p.m. at the Multi-purpose Building. All are invited to bring a covered dish and enjoy this evening of food, fellowship, and singing.

**PANTRY:** Toilet tissue, soap, and deodorant.

**CONTINUE TO REMEMBER:** Mary Nelson, Jenny Rhodes, Bette Gentry, Dan Williams (Sharon's husband), Terry Shultz Sprout, Jim Smith (preacher at Langeloth), Cole Bellon (Michelle Hanlon's nephew).

**SICK & SHUT-IN: AT HOME:** Ruth Brewer, Gene Miller, Thurman Riggs (nephew of Eva Stefl), Helene Wilson, Jack Board, Neva Owen, Harry & Imogene Nice, Doris Dunham, Don Parsons, Ella Beagle, Diane Robinson, Lloyd & Virginia Ferrell, Bette Gentry, Dan Williams, Lloyd Cowdery, Mabel Sprout, Virginia Rickerd, Fred & Jean Larrimore, Sr., Fred Larrimore, Jr., Cheryl Stackpole. **NURSING HOMES:** Fox: Ray Baker. Pleasantview N. Retirement & Rehab., Salem: Ruby Kenney. Weirton Geriatric Center: Edna McKitrick, Ila Plum. Aspen Manor, Wellsburg: Ione Asher.

### Year Round Gifts

**THE GIFT OF PRAISE** - Appropriate mention, right in front of the other fellow, of superior qualities or of jobs and deeds well done.

**THE GIFT OF CONSIDERATION** - Putting yourself in the other's shoes, providing genuine understanding of his side of the case.

**THE GIFT OF CONCESSION** - Humbly saying as just the right point, "I am sorry, you are right, and I am wrong."

**THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE** - Never forgetting to say "I thank you" and never failing to mean it.

**THE GIFT OF ATTENTION** - When the other fellow speaks, listen attentively. If directed to you personally, meet his eye squarely.

**THE GIFT OF INSPIRATION** - Plant seeds of courage and action in the other person's heart.

**THE GIFT OF PERSONAL PRESENCE** - In sickness, in trouble, or in great joy, there is nothing quite equal to your personal expression of sympathy or congratulations.

**RESOLVE** to give these gifts each day. You will be pleasantly surprised at

**Happy Holiday Season**