

LENEXA EDIFIER

“and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32)

December 11, 2022

A Closer Look at Christmas

Chuck Bartlett

In less than a month many people will be enjoying the holiday season called Christmas. Some people treat it as a religious celebration. Others consider Christmas a form of paganism. Still others treat the holiday as nothing more than a festive time to be with family and share gifts and food. Because of these differences, some refuse to say, “Merry Christmas” and will only say, “Happy Holidays”. Some put up decorations, while others refuse to engage in any sort of festive celebration. The question is, how are Christians to view Christmas?

Let’s begin this study with clearing up some myths that have been created over the years. First and foremost, no one knows the day Jesus was born. Therefore, obviously, someone came up with the date December 25th, and that someone was not God. Also, the keeping of Christmas was not done by the early Christians, since there is nothing in the Bible that teaches such. We also might point out that Christians were actually told to commemorate the death of Jesus every first day of the week, not His birth (**Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-26**).

So, just where did Christmas come from? That’s easy, it came from the mind of man. You can google the history and read how that there were religious people who opposed paganism. There were pagan festivals and the religious people thought of creating other religious holidays around the same time as these pagan festivals, so as to draw some of those folks away from paganism.

Like any man-made doctrine, it evolved over time. Now we have Santa Claus, reindeer, and mistletoe, etc. You also are hearing people crying out the need to keep Christ in Christmas, and that Christ is the reason for the season. What we all need to know is that Christ has nothing to do with this.

Is Christ the reason for the season? To be honest – Christ is the reason for all the seasons. As being the one having a hand in creation (**Jn. 1:1-3**), that included creating all four seasons (**Gen. 8:21-22**). No, Jesus did not create Christmas. This came from the mind of man.

What has evolved over hundreds of years, is a holiday for family and friends to come together. Do many want it to be a religious event? Yes. As God’s people, we need not feel guilty for not recognizing this as being Christ’s birthday.

Oh, please don’t get me wrong. I think it’s great that people think about our Savior being born. However, they need to think about why He came, what He taught, and what is expected out of man. I preach about the birth of Jesus. Christ’s coming was a fulfillment of prophecy (**Isa. 7:14**). We can’t have Jesus die on the cross without Him first coming into this world. Yes, Christ’s birth was wonderful, but so was everything else He did.

I think about the time Jesus was baptized by John and the Holy Spirit came upon the Lord in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father cried out, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (**Matthew 3:16-17**). That was a special day. However, we don’t go about picking a time of the year and call it “Baptismal Day”, because Jesus was baptized. People might think it odd to create such a thing, but it would be no different than what people did many years ago concerning the birth of Christ.

Now, is there something sinful in the fact that someone wants to remember the birth of Jesus, knowing it wasn’t actually the 25th of December? Not in any way. In **Romans 14:5-6**, Paul tells brethren that if you esteem one day, or esteem all days alike, do unto the Lord. The point was, as long as you don’t bind your opinion on anyone, you can do as you please. No, this was not referring to doctrinal matters. This is why we don’t gather as a church, to celebrate Christ’s birth on December 25th. Reason being, that would be binding it on others.

To show how things get out of hand with man-made doctrines, it can’t help but breed other false teachings. Have you ever heard about the three wise men that went to see Jesus when He was born? Sure you have. But you didn’t read it in the word of God. The fact is, the Bible didn’t say there were three wise men. Go ahead and read the text (**Matt. 2:7-11**). The reason people say there were three wise men was because it said that Jesus was presented with treasures and presented

gifts to Him of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Now let us address whether or not Christians can put up lights, erect a tree with decorations, and exchange gifts. To begin with we need to determine if celebrating Christmas means one is condoning paganism. I do not believe so and here is why. In this world, many celebrate January 1st by ringing in the New Year. Would you feel uncomfortable saying, "Have a great January 1st?" Or, "Happy New Year"? Of course we wouldn't. Yet, did you know that the word January comes from a Roman god called Janus? Yet, no one is saying they are acknowledging the Roman god when they say "Happy January 1st".

Knowing this to be true, it is possible for Christians to engage in a festive time of the year, without celebrating it as the actual birthday of Christ. Even so, it's vital that we respect the conscience of folks, and if they do not feel comfortable doing such, then they must not (**Rom. 14:23**).

When children of God want to know if it is okay to decorate and share gifts during the season, you have to ask, "Is it violating the teachings of Christ?" Buying someone a gift and spending time with family and friends is not wrong. We do it for birthdays and anniversaries, and other festive occasions.

I will close with one final thought. It saddens me that people who want to stress the importance of Christ's birth, have overlooked the fact that He grew up (**Lk. 2:52**). He walked with man, teaching them to obey His words, so they can become children of God (**Jn. 1:12**). Remembering Jesus once a year is not what He wants. He wants us to come unto Him (**Matt. 11:28**). Can you celebrate today being a Christian? If not, you need to come to Him now.

ZEPHANIAH THE SON OF CUSHI

"The word of the Lord" came to Zephaniah. The phrase, *"The word of the Lord"* is common to the prophets of God (**Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1**); we naturally expect these prophets, God's spokesmen, to be the recipients and messengers of God's word and not a diluted, false message. Their connection to Jehovah was established early in Old Testament history. When God made His covenant with Israel, He told Moses; *"Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians'"* (**Exodus 6:6**). Now, hundreds of years later, God is still speaking His words to His servants the prophets (**Zechariah 1:6**).

Zephaniah 1:1 identifies the prophet's ancestry which

stretches back four generations. His father Cushi (**Jeremiah 36:14**) and Hezekiah, the fourteenth king of Judah (there are others named "Hezekiah"), along with Judah's current king, Josiah, places the prophet in good stead regarding faithfulness to Jehovah (**2 Kings 18-22**). Josiah's reign, 640-609BC, places Zephaniah's prophecy in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

Josiah's reign started at an early age, continuing until his premature death at age thirty-nine (**2 Kings 22:1**). Judah's moral decay was fueled by idolatry and by the refusal of God's own people to heed God's offer of repentance. Josiah's reforms did good; his discovery of the book of the Law (**2 Kings 22:8**), and his efforts to ward off invasions from Assyria and Egypt brought a brief reprieve from the dangers of resisting Jehovah. Soon, the Babylonians invaded the land, bringing a barrenness to God's people.

Zephaniah says that God's judgment is coming. None would be exempt. *"All things" (1:1)* will be subject to God's anger; He would not abide with His creation forever. Not only would Judah face judgment, but the Lord also promised to *"cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests" (1:4)*. Even with Josiah's initial successes in reform, the remnant of Baal still plagued the land. Is it difficult to get rid of all the lingering stench of idolatry? God's people had divided hearts. *"And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven, and those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom, and those who have turned back from following the Lord, and those who have not sought the Lord or inquired of Him" (1:5-6)*. **First Kings 11:5** says: *"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites."* Zephaniah's message says: When you mix the worship of idols with the worship of God, judgment will come.

"Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near, for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests" (1:7). The day of the Lord *must* come. Jehovah is just and righteous. As sovereign over His universe, He must act in accordance with His nature. The sacrifice of judgment on God's enemies will be the accepted sacrifice before the Lord. And why would God's people then be surprised? They refused to consult God; they would not listen to Him. The only proper response to the Lord is total commitment.

Yet we say: Well, that was a long time ago. Times have changed. We are good Christians. While we are

not perfect, we make a nice show of serving God. Do we? *“But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds” (Romans 2:5-6).*

Randy Harshbarger

The Greatest “Service Job” on Earth

L.A. Stauffer

We have heard of a business meeting where some disgruntled members presented the elders with their reasons for wanting to change preachers. One offered, “My daughter says he preaches too long.” The elders were not too impressed with that, but suggested they might ask the man to plan his lessons for a better use of time.

A second complained, “But my wife says he preaches too loud.” The elders thought they might turn down the public address system and solve that weighty problem.

And the third said, “The bad thing is, the liberals just don’t like him.” Well now, that is going to be a bit harder to handle. Makes me think of a bumper sticker: “Get a taste of Religion — BITE A PREACHER.”

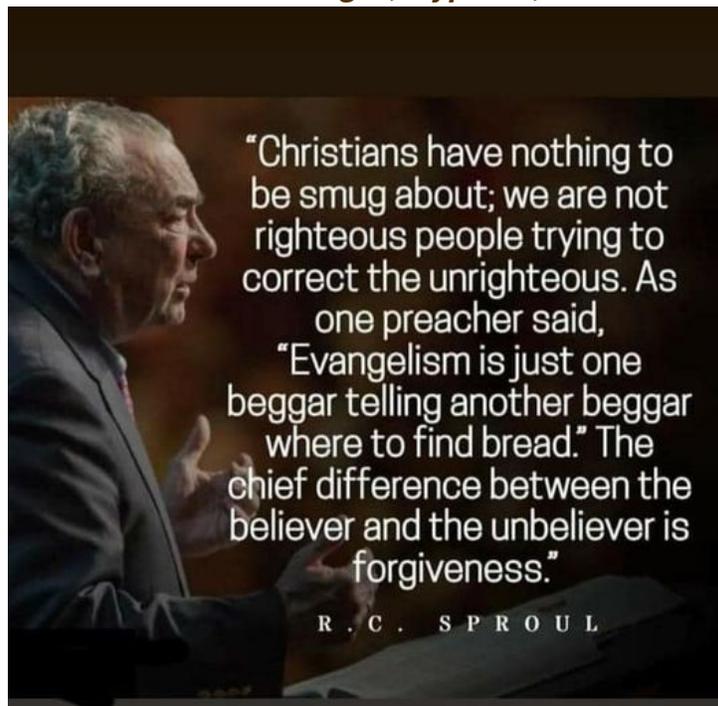
The man who devotes his full time to preaching the gospel deserves better than that. There are bound to be good and bad preachers — and some who should be doing something else. But aside from the “professionals,” and the con-men who think it is an easy way to make a living, preachers are a pretty decent lot. With the education, drive, and self-confidence necessary to make a reasonably successful preacher, a man can make more money and have a less demanding life doing something else. That is why those in it for the money usually drop out in eight to ten years and get into some other field.

It takes a good man Charlie Brown, to go right on doing research, preparing the sort of lessons you and your elders feel are most needed, and presenting them to an audience of note passing teenagers, sleeping parents, ceiling-gazing gum-chewers and a liberal sprinkling of crying babies and their struggling mothers. More than once I have had the strong temptation to close the book and shout, “O.K., you win, you can have it!!”

And then I see the sober, thoughtful look on this teenager; the nod of approval on that parent; and a young mother comes to me after service with an apology for her child, and a request for my outline so she can study it when the child sleeps. If there are problems that fret and discourage us, there are also people who need the Lord, and are appreciative of your efforts to bring the two of them together. When you speak of good and bad preachers — remember the good and bad people they work with, and the fact that, despite rumors to the contrary, preachers are people.

Mothers and Dads, encourage your boys to accept the challenge of the greatest “service job” on earth.

~via Midweek Messenger; Cypress, Texas.



“We offer either in home studies in person or by way of Correspondence Courses.

Call me, Jim Stauffer at 913-620-0563, Evangelist at the Lenexa church of Christ

We believe in worshiping and serving the Lord as He has instructed in His word.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study
Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship
Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

OUR ADDRESS IS:

7845 Cottonwood Dr.
Lenexa, Kansas 66216
913-620-0563

Check out the following websites:

facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist

lenexachurchofchrist.org

Evangelist and Editor: Jim Stauffer

Elders:

Ron Peck
Jim Stauffer

Deacons:

Bill Miller
Troy Armstrong

NEWS AND NOTES:
PLEASE REMEMBER: ALMA BAUMGARTNER, DENESE GORING, BROOKLYN BOYER, TRACY RICHARDSON, MATT BASSFORD, WAYNE MOODY, DAVID AND JOANNE BECKLEY, MARK WALKER, STEVE WIMP, KEN KLING, PAT MCLLOUD., MERRY DEE WOOD AND JAN PATRICK.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS:
1,2,3 JOHN - BILL MILLER
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS:
TITUS, PHILEMON, JAMES - JIM STAUFFER
SUNDAY SERMON:**CAN ANY MAN FORBID WATER?**

What Must I Do To Be Saved?
Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17
Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6
Repent of sins - Acts 17:30
Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10
Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38
Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10