

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

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CHRISTMAS BRINGS THESE THOUGHTS

Jim Stauffer

The most widely recognized and observed holiday in the world is likely Christmas. I realize there are many religions who do not acknowledge Christ as the Son of God but even those people are keenly aware of the effect this holiday has had on people all over the world.

WHAT CHRISTMAS IS NOT.

The birth of Christ is not a day God has identified in His revelation. God has given no instruction at all to worship and celebrate the day of His birth. Think about all the days that were to be observed and celebrated under the Law of Moses. Each of them were identified both by what they meant to God's people, but also the time they were to be observed and how it was to be accomplished. Think about the worship of the Christians in the New Testament. Singing, praying, teaching, giving of their financial means and the keeping of the Lord's Supper have all been instructed in His word. We are told how they are to be accomplished and when and whether it is to be individual, congregational or both. Yet not one single mention is made of when Jesus was born or that any worship by individual or church should be directed to that day.

WHAT GOOD COULD COME OF IT?

All of the good things Jesus taught and did while He was on the earth are necessarily tied to Him being born of a woman in the fulness of time (**Gal. 4:4**). We are told Jesus came to save the people from their sins (**Mat. 1:21**). It is the only begotten Son of God in whom we must believe to be saved from our sins (**John 3:16**). Christmas is supposed to focus on giving to others and no one gave more to others than Jesus did (**Phil. 2:5-8**). Christmas has traditionally brought families together and focused on strengthening the relationships between family and friends. It speaks to brotherly kindness which is vital to being fruitful in Christ (**2 Pet. 1:7,8**). Familial love is the very fabric of a strong society, one that can remember God first and foremost and be drawn to serve Him. All of these are indeed good things that come to some from the celebration of Christmas. Yet, any study of Scripture will teach us it is not the birth of Jesus that teaches these things, it is His death.

THE IRONY OF CHRISTMAS IN THE WORLD.

Paul taught and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ and the power it has to save (**Rom. 1:16**). Look closely

for the emphasis of his message. It was the death, burial and resurrection of Christ that brought salvation to men. **1 Cor. 15:1** *Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, 2 by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures;* It is by the blood of Christ that flowed freely in His death on the cross that our sin is washed away in baptism (**Heb. 9:13-15; Rom. 6:1-4**).

This death of Jesus is to be memorialized according to Jesus, Himself. **Matt. 26:26** *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27 And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins.* Paul then references the teaching of Christ, **1 Cor. 11:23** *For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; 24 and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.* He further shows us the practice of New Testament Christians regarding this Supper, **Acts 20:7** *And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight.*

It is indeed ironic that Jesus and those through whom he revealed the will of God (**John 16:16; 1 Cor. 2:10-13**) should place such emphasis on observing the Lord's Supper in memory of His death while speaking nothing of worshiping His birth. Yet in contrast, the world devotes great emphasis on worshiping His birth and largely ignores biblical teaching on the observance of

continued on page 2

His death. When men reject the observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week as is taught in Scripture, they bring to memory the chastisement Jesus delivered to the Pharisees, *But in vain do they worship me teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men* (Mat. 15:9). And again the words of Jeremiah the prophet, Jer. 10:23 *O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*

Time: On Loan from God

Time can accurately be described as an interlude in eternity—a season designed by God for His earthly creation. As each day begins man is granted so much of this commodity, but few of them think about it and its purposes and uses. Each morning when the day dawns and time is offered to man by God, not many of them really meditate, calculate, and analyze how they should spend what has been given to them in hours, minutes, and seconds. All men have their routines for each day that their lives demand, that are generally unchangeable, and that make automatic withdrawals from their accounts. But beyond that, spending from these accounts is allocated by choices that every man makes. There are three things to remember about the accounts of time that each man must manage.

First, time is a commodity on loan from God to every man who has life. It has been entrusted to him, God's creature, to be spent according to God's will. He, therefore, as a steward of this commodity must remember to spend it thoughtfully and wisely. This calls for every man to "think" seriously each day about his schedule. It beckons him also to employ "wisdom" from God in assigning priorities to his daily activities. And this understanding from God demands an awareness of God Himself as one's "Master."

Second, if God is man's Master, then as a steward of time man must willingly surrender his own will and desires for God's. Stewards, a word that means "managers," can never forget to present themselves as sacrifices for their masters. And this means as stewards of God they must not only forsake sin, but they must assign priorities to innocent pleasures, hobbies, cares of this world, and spiritual responsibilities. TV, movies, sports, shopping, six flags, games on cell phones/lpads, relaxation may never take precedent over one's personal development in the Lord, the spiritual needs of his family, or the work of the Lord's church.

Time must be allocated for Bible study, for prayer, for teaching classes, for visiting shut-ins/sick/spiritual delinquents, for encouraging and lifting up fainthearted brethren, for hospitality toward one another, and for family time and relationships. If this list seems to deplete your account, remember that Jesus said man must love the Lord his God with his "whole" heart and soul and mind and strength (Mark 12:28-33). Yes, Jesus found time for "leisure," "rest," and

"relaxation" (see Mark 6:31), but it didn't bankrupt his account or max out his credit card.

Third, time cannot be put into a savings account, where it accrues interest and can be used at a more convenient season. Time must either be spent or wasted minute by minute. Once it is gone it cannot be recaptured for better or future uses. Who can forget the "one talent" man who buried what was allotted him and was called both a "wicked" and "slothful" servant. And don't forget he was cast into outer darkness because he was an "unprofitable" servant—a steward who failed to manage the "time account" his Lord gave him (see Matt 25:24-30).

The writer of Hebrews lamented his inability to teach some brethren important truths about Jesus and Melchizedek because they had been "dull" or "slothful" students of the word. By "reason of time," he said, they should have been mature Christians, but they had failed to use their time and minds to study. For lack of growth they were babes in Christ who could not on their own discern right from wrong (Heb 5:11-14). That, brethren, is a waste of God-given time!

Yes, brethren, time is on loan from God and Paul says those that walk in wisdom will "redeem" it—"buy it up" from the account God gives them daily to use for righteousness in the midst of a world that is devoted to foolishness and evil (see Eph 5:15-17).

L.A. Stauffer, May 26, 2015 (kirkwoodcoc.org)

The Providence of God

A regular reader of this column asked me to say something about the providence of God. What a vast subject, and what a small grasp I have of the whole! Our word "providence" conveys the idea of providing; the quality or state of being provident. The providence of God generally means, the divine care, guidance and sustaining power of God over the universe and the affairs of men. I find it helpful to think of God's providence in terms of five realms where Scripture specifically has something to say: PERMISSION, PERFORMANCE, PREFERENCE, PROVIDENCE AND PROHIBITION.

There is that which God PERMITS. Paul said, *"...I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits,"* (1 Cor. 16:7; Jas. 4:15). God *"allowed all nations to walk in their own ways,"* and the Hebrew writer said, *"and this we will do if God permits,"* (Acts 14:16; Heb. 6:3). This is clear. In the exercise of His wise providence, there are things God allows or permits.

Also, there is that which God PERFORMS; He makes certain things happen, performing certain actions. He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). God gives to all life, and breath and all things (Acts 17:25). We can affirm, therefore, that God performs certain actions: He makes, He sends, He

gives.

God PREFERS certain things. He desires or prefers that all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (**1 Tim. 2:4**). Many are not interested in His truth, and He does not force them to obey it. But He certainly prefers that all men listen to and give favorable response to His truth. He desires that all men repent, and He prefers that there be no offenses among us (**2 Pet. 3:9; Matt. 18:14**).

There is that which God PROVIDES, in response to our petitions. If we believe what is written in passages like **1 Jno. 5:14,15**, we know God responds to prayer. He says He does, and we can regard those provisions of God as part of His providential dealings (see also **Jas. 1:5,17**).

Then, there are things God PROHIBITS. Certain things are not allowed by God, and this affirmation assumes His activity in the affairs of men. *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will NOT ALLOW you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it,"* (**1 Cor. 10:13**). God, for instance, did not allow the devil to do certain things to Job. Likewise, God does not allow temptation to come into our lives which is beyond our ability to resist! (God not only prohibits irresistible temptation; he "makes" the way of escape.)

These are things I firmly believe about the providence of God. He permits certain things; He performs certain acts; He prefers certain things, provides for us in reply to our prayers, and He prohibits certain things. I entertain no difficulty and no hesitation in regard to the fact of God's providence.

NOW, if you demand that I interpret the details of God's providence from day to day and event to event, I WILL NOT ACCEPT THAT CHALLENGE! A storm occurs and wipes out a whole community, killing several citizens, and the questions follow: Did God cause it, or just permit it? If God caused it directly, why? What did He have in mind? Was this just an indirect consequence of living in a world corrupted by sin? I cannot answer these questions. And, the fact that I function as a gospel preacher does not afford me any depth of insight into the mysteries of providence. The fact that I firmly believe in divine providence does not qualify me to interpret the details!

I know God answers prayer, even though I may not know exactly how He does it. I believe God has the ability to use various influences, circumstances and people for my good. There isn't any doubt in my mind, He has the ability to work among nations. He can use weather, illness and even wicked behavior for His own purposes. But when it comes to exactly and specifically what God causes, controls, permits or provides, I am not capable of knowing all about that. And, I don't need to know all about that. What I need to know is my God and my duty to Him; my Savior and how to respond to and honor Him.

Let us not be ashamed to proclaim the fact of God's providence. But let us be exceeding careful of what we

impulsively affirm, claim or attribute to God. There is a very real danger of *"words without knowledge"* (**Job 38:2; Eccl. 5:2**)

Warren E. Berkley - Pharr, Texas

FOR THOSE WHO ITCH !!!

"A Certain Preacher's Secretary Told My Wife." The story often originates with a third party; to sound authentic, and to remove (?) responsibility from the talebearer. Nurses, secretaries, the maid, or anyone likely to come upon confidential information will do.

"You Know, He's Been Out Of Town A Lot Lately." Give it an element of truth. Fit it in with a few known facts to make it just plausible enough to swallow.

"I Dislike Telling This, But I Know It Is My Christian Duty." By all means, do your duty. The Scriptures say, "rebuke before all" and by taking them one at a time you can have a whole juicy week of it. Clearly, your duty to "tell all" outweighs your duty to (1) check for accuracy: (2) go to the party involved and offer genuine assistance in making correction; (3) consider the effect this publicity will have on many innocent parties.

"I Just Can't Stand Nastiness ---" She said, as she wiped the baby's nose with a diaper. Conveniently, the "righteous indignation" you show may cause others to notice your pure, noble character. If this thing gets out of hand, and you have to suffer for it -- you have always thought you would look nice in a martyr's robe.

Solomon said, *"For lack of wood the fire goeth out; and where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth"* (**Prov. 26:20**). Keep it going, by all or any means. Feed the flame, like an arsonist, hungry for the sight and sound of the conflagration, completely unmindful of the destruction done. Give no heed to the "firemen" who work with experience to right the wrong and save the souls involved.

Building Christian character means developing attitudes and tastes in keeping with the teachings of Christ. It is an impure heart that is attracted to the sordid, unclean things in life. And since, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"* (**Matt. 12:34**); the gossip must be suspected of bad taste. For some strange reason (?) those who think on things pure, lovely, and of good report, do not see or hear half of the private evil so well known to others (**Phil. 4:8**).

We must control our tongues if we are to escape Hell. *"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity."* James indicates the tongue must be constantly watched -- it is never fully tamed. It is a small member, but it may set the course for our eternal destiny. Loose it, and you damn your soul (**Jas. 3**).

Younger widows are warned about *"wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not"* (**1 Tim. 5:23**). I am persuaded we have broadened the field somewhat since Paul's time -- adding a few grass widows, disgruntled married people, and some nosey preachers. Aren't you just itching to know why I wrote this article?

By Robert F. Turner from the Preceptor, Vol. 16, No. 5, March 1967

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

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.

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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

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OUR ADDRESS IS:

7845 Cottonwood Dr.

Lenexa, Kansas 66216

913-764-9170

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THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION:
JIM STAUFFER

REMEMBER EMALI PRICE AND THE
NEW BABY MADYLIN AND HEATHER
ECHOLS AS SHE NEARS TIME FOR
DELIVERY OF THEIR BABY.

SUNDAY MORNING SERMON:
GOD'S MESSENGERS



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