

# LENEXA EDIFIER

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; Eph. 4:11,12

December 20, 2020

## WORSHIPING CHRIST'S BIRTH

by Jim Stauffer

### How do we know whether we are to worship His birth?

The shepherds in the field praised God at His birth. They were directed to Him by angels (**Luke 2**). His birth then was and should be remembered as a joyous occasion. Yet the paucity of Scriptural instruction to anyone except those men to set aside a time to honor His birth is evidence alone that God has not instructed such. We must demand of ourselves the words of the Holy Spirit to devote time and energy to anything in service to God. There simply is no instruction from the Holy Spirit Who revealed the mind of God, therefore the disciples of Christ, the church Jesus died to purchase should not have an organized worship of the birth of the Savior. One last point on this; please compare the authority of Scripture to worship the birth of Christ with the authority to remember in worship His death.

### Yet why we should be thankful for His birth?

As we mentioned above, we are clearly commanded both by Christ (**Mat. 26**) and by the apostle Paul (**1 Cor. 11**) to worship Christ by keeping the memorial He instituted concerning His death. By simple logic Jesus could not have died for the sins of man and overcame death for us without coming to the earth. This is explained fully by the writer of Hebrews in **Chapter 2:14-18**.

### Can we show thankfulness without worshipping in a way man has authorized?

Why would we ask that question in such a way? Because there is a stringent reminder all through the Old and New Testaments not to allow ourselves to deviate from God's plan for our worship and be guided by the ideas of man. Please read passages such as; **Deuteronomy 4:2; Matthew 7:21-23; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 9**. These are just a few of the grave warnings of what is to come for those who follow the leader as man devises ways he deems are appropriate for worship.

### Now, how should you respond to these words?

I beg of you for your own benefit as you strive to please God not to be insulted or become angry over these points being made. They are made sincerely. They are not intended to make you think less of Jesus as so many denominations set aside special worship periods over His birth. They are intended to cause you to come to a fuller realization of the way we are to honor God. It is His word that is to lead us, not the word of men hundreds of years after the life and death of our Savior. Consider the following passage of Scripture and all the implications of it as regards this subject: *"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."* (**1 John 2:3-6**)

## What Has This Year Taught Us?

Andy Sochor

With a global pandemic, lockdowns, economic woes, a contested Presidential election, and more, this has been quite an unusual year. While the wise man noted that *"there is nothing new under the sun"* (**Ecclesiastes 1:9**), from our perspective it can seem like we are living in unprecedented times. As the events of this year have unfolded, there are some important truths that have been highlighted. These have always been true, but they are more apparent in light of recent events. Let us briefly consider a few points.

### The Future Is Unpredictable

Many plans that were made for this year had to be postponed, altered, or cancelled altogether. While there never have been guarantees as far as our future plans are concerned, this year has made this reality even clearer. The wise man wrote, *"If no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen?"* (**Ecclesiastes 8:7**). James reminded us,

*“Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).* This year should serve as a reminder for us that we cannot predict what will transpire in the days, months, and years to come.

### **Man Does Not Have All the Answers**

As people around the world were faced with a previously unknown virus, it was clear that, despite the best efforts of doctors and government officials, no one was sure of the best way to deal with the situation. The Proverb writer said, *“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2).* In other words, man will never find all of the answers he is looking for – even those who are seemingly in the best position to have the resources necessary to pursue these answers. This is one reason why the psalmist wrote, *“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes” (Psalm 118:8-9).* As many admonish us to trust the scientists or government officials, we need to be sure our trust is in the Lord first.

### **Life Is Fragile**

Throughout the pandemic this year, many people have died from the virus and from complications related to it. Of course, death has always been a certainty. *“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).* Yet the constant news coverage of virus-related deaths and the accounts of sickness and death among those with whom we are personally acquainted has brought this into the forefront of our minds. As we already noticed, our life is *“just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).* Though one may live *“seventy [or] eighty years,”* once the end comes, whenever that is, our life is *“soon...gone and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10).*

### **Brethren Need One Another**

Across the country, churches have shifted from regular assemblies to virtual “assemblies.” Even if churches have continued to meet in person, many members have not assembled due to health concerns or other reasons. The isolation that many have experienced during the pandemic has taken a toll on our society. In fact, a recent Gallup survey found that *American’s mental health ratings have dropped to a new low among every demographic except one – those who attend religious services weekly.* The Hebrew writer explained the importance of the assembly: *“And let us consider how to stimulate one*

*another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25).* The assembly is not just about worshipping God and fulfilling our obligation to Him. It is also about encouraging one another. During difficult times, brethren need this encouragement from one another even more.

### **Our Hope Must Be in the Lord**

No one knows if or when the situation with the pandemic will improve. No one knows if or when our economy or life as we knew it will ever return to “normal.” For all we know, from our limited human perspective, conditions could get even worse in the future compared to how they are now. However, as Christians we have hope beyond this life. Paul told the brethren in Corinth, *“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. [...] So also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:19-22).* Jesus told His apostles, *“Take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).* Through Jesus’ resurrection, we can have the same courage. Paul encouraged the Christians in Rome by saying, *“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).* Despite all of the negative things that have happened this year – and what could happen next year and beyond – we have hope through Christ.

### **Conclusion**

As we approach a new calendar year, let us remember what the Bible teaches on these points we have considered. Moving from one year to another does not change the truth of what God’s word has said. No matter what happened this year or what is in store for the next, let us keep our hope and trust in the Lord.

## **Season’s Greetings**

My authorship of this column has been sponsored for over eleven years by the El Dorado Church of Christ which meets at 637 South High Street here in El Dorado. The column itself predates my involvement by a number of years but I began writing while I was preparing to move here from my native Pennsylvania with my bride of then thirty, now forty years, Nancy Jo. During the time we have lived here we have come to view this town, El Dorado, as our home, and we hope to spend the rest of our days here as we have made many close and dear friends.

As I have written this column I hope that it has

been apparent that the scriptures have been, and will always be, the guiding light. The churches of Christ have a saying amongst ourselves: Let us speak where the scriptures speak and be silent where they are silent. That is a modern way of conveying the ancient adage contained in **Deuteronomy 4:2** *"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."* This principle is also repeated in the last verses of the New Testament **Revelation 22:18, 19**. In keeping this commandment I have tried to write the column as though you and I were sitting across the kitchen table from each other with a cup of coffee having a friendly discussion about the scriptures. I have at times been rather blunt in pointing out that some things being taught in the name of religion are just plain wrong! People who truly love each other have always spoken this way with each other, haven't they?

In closing, Nancy and I wish you all the best, this Christmas and always!

**Cleveland R. Reddinger Jr.**

## Calling the Disciples

*"Again, the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So, they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter) (John 1:35-42 NASV).*

From the beginning, Jesus called men and women to be His disciples. In the 1<sup>st</sup> c. if you wanted to learn from someone, you might have to find a teacher on your own. Jesus, though, sought out people to learn from Him and to learn of Him. Those who decided to follow Jesus would begin to know something about the Lamb of God; in fact, two disciples begin listening and following. John's gospel takes us into eternity past;

now, Jesus' work leads to the future. Chronological markers (**1:29, 39, 43; 2:1**) show the progress Jesus makes as He calls for followers. The respondents, people like you and me, were embarking on a journey they could not imagine. They had strengths and weaknesses, patience and prejudices; in time, they would have faith, often strong, sometimes weak. But for now, they are answering Jesus' call.

Andrew, after hearing Jesus, invited Peter to hear the Rabbi. Andrew had found the Messiah, translated as *the Christ*. Kings in the OT were anointed; Jesus' anointing is expanded and applied to Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Did these early disciples have a full understanding of Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ of God? Later, Peter would acknowledge Jesus as the Christ of God (**Matthew 16**). Simon was given a new name, portending something more than just fishing for fish. Philip told Nathaniel that we have found the one spoken of in the Law and the prophets; is this a clue about Jewish Messianic expectations? Jesus said that Nathaniel was without deceit or guile. Whatever Nathaniel might have been doing or thinking, Jesus clearly had insight that others did not have (**John 2:25**).

Jesus asked the two disciples (**John 1:38**) what they wanted. What did they want to find in seeking Jesus? What do we want from Jesus? A Savior, a Friend, a Counselor? What about a life-coach? Or, a spiritual guru? We can take our cue from John the Baptist. He was happy to urge his followers to follow Jesus. John was not jealous; he didn't seek his own personal following. John did his work well, even to the point of death (remember Herod Antipas). Weighing the possible consequences of following Jesus was not what John or these early disciples did. They were telling each other about Jesus. Jesus is helping them understand who He is. They would soon learn what it meant to be disciples of the Savior. Do we really want to answer Jesus call?

**Randy Harshbarger**

## Opposing Contrasts in 1 John by Don Bunting

When you are reading the Bible, it is more engaging if you know something the book offers that you can look for. Often there are various areas of focus, as in John's first letter. Consider with me the strong contrasts found in **1 John**. I call them strong contrasts because the two things contrasted are mutually exclusive. You cannot hold both. You must choose one or the other. The text tells us that you cannot compromise the two and you cannot avoid

choosing. Before God, you must choose to walk one way or the other.

No wonder God delivered this specific message to us. We do not like to choose. We want to taste *both* cookies. We want to vacillate in our opinions, depending on circumstances. We want to find ourselves somewhere on the scale (from 1-10) rather than be all the way, one way or the other. We judge good and bad in varying tones of gray instead of black or white.

I will list some of the absolute contrasts found in **1 John**. You can watch for more!

- God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. We walk either in light or darkness. **(1:5-7)**.
- We know God by keeping His commandments. Either we do or we don't. **(2:3-6)**.
- A man either loves or hates his brother. Do I love or do I hate my brother? **(2:9-11)**.

John is writing in a tone of certainty and absolutes. An effect of this kind of message is confidence. Another key word in **1 John** is *know*. (You might count how many times the word is found in this short book, just for fun.) In **1 John 2:5** we read: "*By this we know that we are in Him.*" In a world of uncertainty, where conflicting opinions and ideologies flourish, John is giving God's people truths to stand on. John says, "*And these things we write to you that your joy may be full*" **(1 John 1:4)**.

Confidence in a relationship with God offers joy!

John is a beautiful book of assurance, giving confidence to God's people, but be willing to choose right! Find a time to read the book, slowly, in one sitting. You can probably read the entire letter in fifteen minutes.

### NEWS AND NOTES

#### Sick in need of prayers:

JAN PATRICK, ALMA BAUMGARTNER, TRUDY MULLEN, RENE RATLIFFE, DENESE GORING, RODNEY BLOUNT, BROOKLYN BOYER, PAT GAINES' BACK SURGERY SCHEDULED FOR 01/21/21. TRACY AWAITING ADDITIONAL SURGERY SCHEDULED TO COMPLETE THE REMOVAL OF TUMOROUS TISSUE.

SUNDAY BIBLE CLASS - EVIDENCES - BILL MILLER

WEDNESDAY BIBLE CLASS - THE PARABLES - BY MULTIPLE TEACHERS (BOTH CLASSES OFFERED ON ZOOM)

SUNDAY SERMON: GOD IS GOD: FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL

### What Must I Do To Be Saved?

**Hear** the gospel - **Rom. 10:17**

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - **Heb. 11:6**

**Repent** of sins - **Acts 17:30**

**Confess** Christ as Lord - **Rom. 10:9,10**

**Baptism** for remission of sins - **Acts 2:38**

*"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."* **(Revelation 2:10)**

**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.*

### ADDRESS AND HOURS OF WORSHIP

7845 Cottonwood Dr. Lenexa, Kansas, 66216

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Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study/ Worship

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**Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer**

**Elders:**

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*"Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:"*

**(Philippians 1:1)**