

## WHY SHOULD WE KEEP JESUS IN CHRISTMAS?

In colonial times newspaper “reporters” were nothing more than acquaintances of the publisher, writing home from their travels. Unable to prove or disprove their reports, cautious publishers often printed them under the headline “Important If True.” A British skeptic of the late 19th century suggested that those three words should be carved in stone over all church doors: “Important if true.” The question is, “is Christmas important, and is it true?” In a spiritual sense, society is answering that question with a resounding “no.”

There is a movement that grows stronger with every year to remove Christ from Christmas. If you’re going to be politically correct, you don’t say “merry Christmas.” You now say “happy holidays” because you don’t want to offend anyone by mentioning the name “Christ.”

Back in 2003, in Tupelo, Mississippi, elementary school students were not allowed to sing Christmas carols until school officials removed any reference to Jesus Christ.

In Covington, Georgia, the ACLU filed suit against the public school district there because its calendar designated December 25 as Christmas, thus advancing a religion.

The Little Rock, Arkansas, City Council changed its annual parade from the Christmas parade to the Holiday Parade, so as not to offend non-religious people or those of other faiths.

The following is a transcript from one of the most liberal networks, Msnbc Fri., Dec. 2, 2005 Is there a war against Christmas? The ACLU and a lot of other people have been trying to take Christ out of Christmas for years. At this time of year, many people will believe that that's a real concern. Friday night, in Newport News, Va., 8,000 people are expected to show up for the town's Christmas celebration, except they are not calling it that. They're calling it Hollydazzle. And instead of lighting the 40-foot Christmas tree, Newport News officials are going to be lighting, get this, the tree of illumination.

Gene Edward Veith, writing in the World magazine (December 6, 2003), writes, "...American Christianity is conforming to the dominant secular culture. It is all right to be religious, according to the dictates of postmodernism, as long as your faith exists just in your head. If you start claiming that your beliefs are more than just a private mental state that makes you feel good, asserting instead that what you believe is objectively real and valid for everybody, then you are an intolerant menace to society."

So, is Christ important enough to be left in Christmas? If so, what makes Christmas important?

## 1. Jesus is God's Christmas gift to us

Since the Christmas season began, one word has fallen from our lips more than any other. I don't think it's the word joy or carol or tree or food. I think it's the word gift. If you listen in on conversations in shopping malls and on parking lots around the country, I'm sure you'll hear the word mentioned several times. We have lists of gifts we hope to buy. Some have lists of gifts they hope to receive.

*2 Corinthians 9:15 speaks of God's Christmas gift to us. It says, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"*

That verse was written by Paul the apostle who was a brilliant man with a broad vocabulary. He was a master of the Greek language and a capable communicator. He was probably the greatest theological mind that has ever come into existence. And yet he pauses when he comes to this simple four-letter word "gift" and says it is indescribable. Paul with all his knowledge could not find a word to describe God's gift, so he coined this word "indescribable."

Why is this gift too awesome for words? I mean, after all, it's just a baby. If this had been an ordinary conception and if he had been an ordinary infant, there would have been nothing indescribable about him. He would have been just like any other baby. Since He was not ordinary in any sense of the word, this brilliant man says the gift of this child is indescribable.

G. Campbell Morgan said, "Christ is the mystery of God. Perfect analysis and explanation of His Person is impossible.... The subject is therefore to be approached with holy and submissive reverence."

You see that kind of submissive reverence in the wise men who visited the baby Jesus in the Nativity story.

## 2. Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy

The baby Jesus comes wrapped in prophecy. God didn't just suddenly drop Jesus Christ out of heaven to earth. He prepared His people for Christ's coming hundreds of years ahead of time. So, whereas we anticipate the coming of a child for 9 months, the Jewish people had been waiting for Jesus for centuries, and they knew His name. The naming of a baby is a happy time. In the Bible, names were given that had meaning and significance.

*Isaiah 7:14 " Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. "Immanuel" means "God with us. "*

Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ,

*Isaiah 9:6 says, "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

First, His name shall be called wonderful. That's an unusual name for someone. It talks about the uniqueness of the person and the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. When people saw Jesus, they were stricken with wonder at the things He said and did. Isaiah goes on to say, "Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

No one fits that description except the indescribable Gift, the Christ child. The Jews held on to those prophecies down through time.

*Micah 5:2: "As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah..." from you Bethlehem—it's time to be ready from your territory, from your streets—from you Bethlehem, little Bethlehem, one will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from eternity."*

The prophecy that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem was written 750 years before the Lord Jesus was born, and the Jews knew the prophecy was about the birthplace of God's coming King. Jesus didn't come into this world like any other child. His life was foretold before He was born.

### **3 . Jesus is our creator wrapped in human flesh**

The apostle John gave us a wonderful description of who Jesus is in

*John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

We know who John meant by the "Word" because in verse 14 he tells us, *"And the Word became 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 begins by telling us "In the beginning was the Word." Those words do not refer to a start. They refer to a state. The Word did not have a start; he existed in an eternal state. The first three words are very recognizable because they also begin the first book of the Bible. But the words John uses describes something before the creation in Genesis. We really don't know how old the universe is. Some people say that it is billions of years old. Some people say it is millions of years old. Some say it is thousands of years old. However old the universe is, Jesus already existed when it was created. You could translate verse 1 this way: "In the beginning was the Word, is the Word, and always will be the Word."

Before there was a world, there was a Christ. Before there was a sun to shine, a moon to glow, a star to twinkle, or a river to flow, there was Jesus. Jesus had his birth in

Bethlehem, but not his beginning. He is the only person ever born who, at the moment of his birth, was older than his mother, and as old as his father.

Over and over and over Jesus proved that He was God in the flesh. He could say to the wind and the waves "peace be still," and they would obey Him. He could say to a man lame not only "get up and walk, but your sins are forgiven you." People would come and bow down before him and worship him and He would accept their worship. He could tell a woman at a well he had never met, that she had had five husbands and was living with a man not her husband. To put it in theological terms, undiminished deity took upon himself perfect humanity.

Charles Wesley in his hymn set it this way:  
Christ, by highest heavens adored;  
Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold him come,  
offspring of the virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
hail the incarnate Deity,  
pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Jesus came to do what no one else could do

## **4. Jesus gives us the power to live life**

### ***a) Jesus came to bring help to the troubled***

No one really has it all together. We all have trouble. Everyone deals with problems and hurts and regrets and fears. Everyone struggles with sin. No doubt, some of you here today are struggling -- with your past, your own inadequacies, with your sinful habits. You are not alone. We're all in the same boat. Jesus came to heal your hurts and give you victory over your troubles.

*Isaiah 61:1-2, "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor."*

Everyone falls into one, if not all, of these categories. Maybe one of your struggles is a financial one. You can be glad and thankful that you have a God who knows your need and who can provide in ways you never thought possible. Throughout the years, I have seen God provide for me in ways that I would have never imagined.

He came to bind up the broken-hearted. There's not a person here today who hasn't been hurt through some kind of failed relationship. If not your own, then the failed relationship of a parent, or a child or a close friend. Jesus came to bind up that wound.

He came to proclaim freedom to the captives. Is there something in your life that is holding you captive? Are you a prisoner to addiction, or guilt, or fear, or pride? Jesus came to set you free from the power of the past and from the fear of the future.

### ***b) Jesus came to replace the ugliness in your life***

Christmas cards can give you a warm, fuzzy feeling when you look at them. A picture of a snow covered landscape, with a cozy cottage nestled in the woods. In the window you see the decorated tree. The smoke rising from the chimney tells you there's a fire inside. You can almost smell the pumpkin pie. Or, how about the scene with the Christmas carolers standing beneath the falling snow on the front steps of someone's home, under the light of moon. Their faces are like those of angels. You can almost hear the words ... Silent night, holy night. All is calm, all is bright. The problem is that we don't live in that world. That's not the real world.

The world we've created is full of pain, failures and regrets. We can't overcome those things on our own, but Jesus came to turn the something ugly into something beautiful. He came to...

*Isaiah 61:2-3 ...comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion -- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*

God wants to pour the oil of gladness on you. He wants to clothe you with a garment of praise. You might say, "But I don't feel praise in my heart." Praise isn't about feelings. You don't praise God by telling him how good you feel. You praise God by telling Him how good he is. As you begin thinking about all the good things He's done for you and praising him, you find your feelings beginning to change.

Christ also gives you the strength to start over.

*Isaiah 61:4 They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.*

Maybe there are things in your life that you thought have been destroyed forever. No matter how much you have suffered, no matter how much disappointment you have experienced, no matter how much guilt you have piled up -- he is ready to help you rebuild what you once lost.

*Isaiah 61:7 Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.*

## **5. Jesus came to give you eternal life**

All the great things that Jesus can do for your life amounts to nothing in comparison with his gift of salvation. The truth is that in spite of how good God has been to us, we have all sinned against him, and we need forgiveness. That forgiveness comes through Jesus Christ and His death on a cross. Paul said for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. That eternal life is available to you and to me simply by turning our lives over to him and asking for His forgiveness.

*2 Corinthians 9:15 "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"*

This Christmas I hope you connect with Christ. More than just connect, I hope you cling to Christ. Talk to him every day, throughout the day. Put on the garment of praise. Ask him to fill your life with his mighty presence ... because his presence is enough to make all the difference in the world.