



The Time of Year

This time of year (December, 2007) is a time where idolatry is displayed in many places. We see the coveting of children and adults alike. We see children and adults acting very spoiled in wanting certain things and then over not getting what they wanted. This time of year is the biggest in terms of sales for businesses and if they do not do well this time of year, the business will most likely fold. For many businesses from the time of Thanksgiving through the first few days of the New Year they will do around 70-90% of their yearly sales. It sounds like a holiday made in business heaven. But what is it that inspires and even pushes and motivates people to enter into such a spending frenzy?

Much of what happens is said to be a celebration of the birth of Christ. We have people entering into heavy debt as a celebration of the birth of Christ. Well, one might imagine that people are giving a lot to ministries and missions by using their credit cards. Then we find out that for the most part it is people giving things that people don't really need and could do quite well without. How is it that a celebration of the birth of Christ has been turned into a time of drunkenness, revelry, debt, and all manner of self-indulgences? Perhaps it is as simple as people having a religious reason to do what they want and others simply doing what they want apart from the religious aspect of it.

Whether one does or doesn't believe in a yearly celebration of the birthday of Christ is perhaps not the issue. What is important is that many people are going to attend a building with the name "church" on the door. Someone is going to give a sentimental message about a baby or someone is going to declare the truth about Jesus Christ. As bad as the world is in its self-absorbed pursuits, thinking of Jesus Christ solely in terms of His being human is as bad. What people need to hear is that the manger (euphemism for donkey feeder) held God in human flesh. The world and all things in it were created by and for Him. He does not demand that we give Him gifts since all things are His and we can give Him nothing that He has not first given to us. He does not demand that we go into debt in order to give Him gifts, but instead He has paid the spiritual debts of His people on the cross and gifts them with eternal life by grace. He does not demand that they engage in revelry, but bow to Him in worship the whole year. What He does say, however, is captured in the words of Luke 6:46-49 which are quoted below.

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 "Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 "But the one who has heard and has not

acted *accordingly*, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great" (Luke 6:46-49).

What we must realize in the hustle and bustle of the year is that all of the external religious activity is of no benefit at all apart from obeying Christ as Lord. Many will refer to Christ as Lord and it will be nothing more than the lips. Jesus Christ came to earth, was seen in the flesh, but He was very God of very God. We do not honor Him in His birth or in any way unless we bow to Him as Lord. If we do not bow to Him as Lord in our hearts and lives, we are not really celebrating the birth of Christ the King. He was born a king and is now King of kings. The spirit of this season and all seasons is bowing in submission to King Jesus. If He was born a king and is the eternal King, then all that is done, even in His name, apart from submission to Him is not done to His glory.

Some might call this being like a Scrooge, but it is far more important to be biblical. We must get out of the mindset that we are doing Jesus a favor by our celebrations and giving gifts to each other. Our command is to love Christ with all of our being and to obey Him in all of His words. In fact, the Great Commission teaches us that we are to make disciples by teaching them to obey all that He commanded. The truth of the matter is hard to bear up under, yet we must ask a tough question. What

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Associational News & Prayer Requests

If you would like to submit prayer requests or information for the weekly update, please email it to trinity@wamego.net.

Quotes

"Everyday we may see some new thing in Christ. His love hath neither brim nor bottom." Samuel Rutherford

Balance in Preaching—"Some persons preach only doctrine; that makes people all head, which is a monster. Some preach only experience; that makes the people all heart, which is a monster too. Others preach only practice; that makes people all hands and feet, which is likewise a monster. But if you preach doctrine and experience and practice, by the blessing of God, you will have head, and heart, and hands, and feet—a perfect man in Christ Jesus." Dr. John "Rabbi" Duncan (1796-1870)



The Time of Year (Continued)

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would happen if 50-75% (or more) of the money spent this time of year by those who attend church on a regular basis was given to missions? What would happen if the time we spent with all of the trappings and goings on were used in prayer and evangelism? What would happen if for one December a few churches devoted themselves to prayer and fasting with the same fervor that many give the season each year? I would suggest that it would be far more honoring to Christ than what is going on in our day.

When we look at Matthew 25:31-46, we see part of what Christ commands of us. Imagine being before the Son of Man on judgment day when all the nations are gathered before him and He is separating them from one another. We know that many will say many things in an effort to go into heaven, yet Christ says this: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*" (Mat 7:21). The Scripture continues on with the plea that many are crying out that they prophesied in His name and they cast out demons in His name and they cast out demons and did miracles in His name. His reply to them is harder than we can imagine right now: "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS'" (Mat 7:23). All of their religion and all of their religious observances did not hide His all-seeing eye from seeing that they did not really love Him and practiced lawlessness. Ask yourself this season or time of the year what Christ really thinks of what you are doing in light of Matthew 25:31-46. As you read that ask yourself if you are really concerned about believers across the world right now. Are you really concerned that Christ (as one with His people) is hungry, thirsty and naked? Are you really ready to celebrate Christ according to His command this year?

Matthew 25:31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? 38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that

you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least of *them*, you did it to Me.'

41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' 44 "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The last two verses are very striking. To the extent we do not do these things to the very least of His people, we don't do it to Him. How we treat His people in our church and yet His people across the world is how we treat Christ Himself because He lives in them and He is their life. We live in an affluent part of the world and really don't need what people give us and usually other people have no real need for what we give them. All of the toys and game boxes are of no interest to those who are starving. There are believers in the world that are in need. How will you honor the birth of the King this time of year or will you in reality? Can we truly honor the birth of Christ in the world without loving Christ through His people in the world that He was born to die for and save? When John the Baptist began to doubt if Jesus was the Messiah or not, he sent messengers to ask this of Jesus: "Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: 5 *the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM*" (Mat 11:4-5). This pointed to the fact that He fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about Him. Has Christ changed? If not, He will be working that same attitude and life in those He lives in and shares the divine life with. May we all truly honor the King this season and all other seasons too. It is part of loving God with all of our being all of the time as the Great Commandment commands us to do.

Some might think this is a condemnation of all seasonal celebrations. It is not, but it is grieving to some to see the commands of Christ so ignored and set aside at the expense of things that are not commanded. Let us not forget the true spirit of Christ and the commands of Christ this season amongst the business and rituals that have been set up. After all, obedience to the King is important during all times of the year.

Richard Smith