

Reclaiming Christmas – satan has had a hold on it long enough!

Almost everyone celebrates Christmas—not because of Jesus but because everyone else does. It is the best time of the year for parties and celebration that have nothing to do with Christ but simply afford more opportunities to “make merry.” Office parties, neighborhood gatherings or just your friends, family gatherings, and travelers in record numbers each year.

The secular world, ruled by satan himself since the fall of Adam and Eve, hijacked Christmas a few generations ago. He watched with great pleasure as the celebration of the birth of Christ slowly turned into a commercial enterprise that has grown exponentially over the years. Sadly, all of us have fallen prey to this clever deception that plays on our lust for more or desire to get our kids what they want for Christmas. Why? Because as kids, we begged our parents to do the same. We liked to compare what we got with of our friends' hauls. When we became parents, we were pre-programmed to this kind of Christmas and continued to enlarge the world of materialism. Consider this:

The average American spends ~\$1000 a year for things related to Christmas. One estimate stated the total spend is approaching \$1 trillion—that's twelve zeros! Many go into huge debt to satisfy the materialistic wants of people including our children. We need to teach them better.

Perhaps the saddest development of all is what recent polling reveals: every year more Americans say Christmas has little or no religious meaning, just as many say the importance of religion in their lives has waned or disappeared altogether. Let's be honest. This nation has no need for Christ in

Christmas. They have a great time without any association with Him.

History of His-story:

Christmas, the word comes from the words “mass on the day of Christ’s birth. In the 4th century AD in Rome, during the rule of Constantine who was a Christian, there was a pagan celebration around December 25 for the “Unconquered Sun.” It marked the beginning of longer days (winter solstice). Christians in Rome began celebrating Jesus’ birth in 336 AD, some say to offset this pagan tradition. Christmas did not become a legal federal holiday in the US until 1870.

Christmas trees and greenery also had their roots in pagan festivals and celebrations. They were later used in Christian ones that were created and the Christmas tree came out of that. Gift giving is about the only tradition that had roots in one of the most special scenes in the Bible. Wise men or magi came from the East to search out the child king that was to be born according to prophecy. (The Bible does not say there were three of them. That tradition was born from the fact that there were three gifts. So it very likely means there were three men.)

They brought gifts to honor this special king and each gift had special prophetic meaning:

Gold for a king. Frankincense was used by the high priests. Myrrh was used to anoint bodies for burial. Christ the King and High Priest Who would give His life for our sins.

For the remainder of our time, I am going to review the true Christmas story and end by challenging Christians to change the way we celebrate His coming.

What started it all: Sin. From Genesis 3 to present. *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ... and the wages of sin is death.”* But in Genesis 3:15, in cursing satan, God

gave us the promise on One Who would come to save the world from sin.

The Prophecies (just a few)

And I will make enemies Of you and the woman, And of your offspring and her Descendant; He shall bruise (crush) you on the head, And you shall bruise Him on the heel."
Genesis 3:15

"For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of armies will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will come forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His times of coming forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." Micah 5:2

(Witnesses) *"In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. And so the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger. "Luke 2:8-12*

His Purpose

*"an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son; and you shall name Him Jesus, **for He will save His people from their sins.**" Matthew 1:21*

(The Apostle Paul confirmed this) "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." 1 Timothy 1:15

His Person (Who Jesus is)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" John 1:1-5, 14

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

(The Apostle Paul affirmed) "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons and daughters." Galatians 4:4

What Jesus said (His message)

*From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4: 17*

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Luke 5:32

And that is why we celebrate Christmas! The Gift ... not just the baby Jesus because the baby could not save us. But the man Who lived a sinless life; Who was the only perfect Lamb worthy to God to be sacrificed for our sins. His blood alone could atone for them. His resurrection conquered death and demonstrated to the world then and now that He is God.

I say one final time: Jesus is the only reason we celebrate Christmas – the only one.

What if Christians began celebrating Christmas differently?

What if it was ALL about Christ and nothing of ourselves. Considering doing these things next Christmas:

1. Plan ahead to give a gift to children because they do not yet understand the concept of materialism and how it robs the joy from most and adds stress during this Holy season. This is a great time to begin to teach them the true meaning and that we give because God gave; we receive gifts as a symbol that we must receive Christ's offer of salvation for our sins.
2. Then find people or families that have nothing or so little that they do not have Christmas in the way most do. Give as an expression of love for the Gift God gave us and to honor Christ as the three wise men did.
3. Christmas Eve service of worship somewhere with your family.
4. Read the Christmas story from the Bible as a family on Christmas Day before any other events take place. I like to have the children read *Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-20*
5. Let your prayers be thanks to God for His indescribable Gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

For Christ's sake,

Walter