

The Holidays

The holiday season is in full swing! This time of year brings some happy times, and it brings some sad times. The sadness comes from seeing how the season has been so commercialized and how businesses capitalize on ways to take your dollars away from you. During the season, there is also so much conflict between secularism and religious matters. This week, I saw a cartoon with Santa Claus with his sleigh, gifts and reindeer along with a new-born Jesus in a manger with the supposed scenery of his birthplace. The two just don't seem to go together.

Nowhere in the Bible is mention made of the exact date that Jesus was born, and history cannot confirm the precise time. Men have chosen the day to celebrate as our Saviour's birth date. The Bible does give us the beautiful story of Jesus' humble birth, and if the date had been important, it would have been provided. The Bible means what it says and says what it means, and we are told in 2 Peter 1:2-3, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (NKJV). All things that we need to know have been provided for our learning, and the birth date of Jesus was not one of those things.

Don't get me wrong! The holidays are a special time to us, but not because we celebrate it as Christ's birth. They are special because families come together for good family time. Some even make long trips just to be with family at this time of year, and it may be the only time all year that they are able to be together. We also enjoy the gift-giving, although we don't go *all out*. We usually make a little driving tour to see the decorations; they are just as pretty to us as they are to others. Yet, we do not celebrate the day as the birth of Jesus.

The importance of the birth of Jesus is the fact that He had to be born to die. In speaking of the divinity and the humanity of Christ, John said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). He continued, "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" (14). "The Word" here refers to our Lord. Jesus came to offer Himself as an atonement for the sins of all mankind, as we read in Philippians 2:8. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

Jesus became flesh just as we are, lived a human life and died a cruel death on Calvary's cross "...that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus came to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice to destroy the hold that Satan has over men. He did become that perfect sacrifice for men's sins and only through Him can men have forgiveness of sin. That's why the death of Jesus is more important than His birth.

Another important aspect of the life of Jesus was His willingness to serve others. At this time of year, we see more of this attitude around us. The Gospel accounts are full of how Jesus did serve others and told others to do likewise. We read in Matthew 5:39-42, "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away."

During this holiday season, do remember Jesus but in a way that the Scriptures support. Remember His death and what it means to you, and remember the wonderful lessons He taught about how we are to live and treat others. He was born, lived and died that you might have eternal life with Him in Heaven. John said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). Knowing God and Christ means learning and understanding what is expected of you and doing it!

By Royce Pendergrass