

## **A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON AN OLD CHRISTMAS STORY**

### **Luke 2:1-20**

Millions of dollars are being spent in an effort to provide gifts for others every Christmas season. Many people will be surprised by what they receive, or disappointed that they did not receive what they wanted. How did we get to the point of Christmas being more about shopping than worship? Does Scripture even tell us to remember the Lord's birthday? Why is Santa Claus more popular than Jesus among children?

#### **I. TRADITION QUICKLY REPLACES TRUTH WHEN WE IGNORE SCRIPTURE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY.**

A. There really was a "Santa Claus" that did good deeds, but even he knew that Jesus Christ was the reason for the season!

*1. Nicholas was born in 280 A.D. in Patara of Asia Minor, to a wealthy elderly couple that previously were unable to have children. He showed an early dedication to the Lord's work, inherited great wealth from his parents, and secretly gave gifts to needy families before being discovered. He was a man of fasting and prayer, and was credited with miracles of healing and praying for someone who was brought back to life after a tragic accident. He visited the Holy Land and Golgotha, desiring to learn more about our Lord. He served the church as a Bishop, accomplishing great things as a leader. After his death, (December 6, 343 A.D.) a practice developed of secretly giving gifts on the anniversary of his death. He experienced persecution along with other believers at that time, until Constantine and others stopped the persecution.*

*Constantine supposedly saw the first two letters of the Greek name for Christ when he was going into battle, receiving a message to conquer in this name. The first letter is written like an "X" and eventually became known as the cross of Christ, and eventually criss cross. The X stood for "may Christ give me success", and the X became a signature for those who could not write. (William Federer)*

*Nicholas eventually became known as Saint Nicholas, Saint Nicklaus eventually Santa Claus.*

B. Tradition says that Gabriel appeared to Zacharias as he ministered for the Day of Atonement, which would have been in September. His wife (Elizabeth) was six months pregnant when Mary visited her, which is said to make the Annunciation date for Mary on March 25th, and birth of Jesus on December 25th.

C. In 354 A.D. Pope Liberius led the effort to end the pagan worship of the Roman Saturn, the "god of the unconquered sun." He wanted the Unconquered Son of God to be worshipped, and the Mass of Christ (Christ's Mass) to replace the pagan day of worship among believers.

#### **II. THE FACT OF THE INCARNATION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN KNOWING THE ACTUAL DATE OF THE LORD'S BIRTH. SCRIPTURE RECORDS THE FIRST CELEBRATION, AND WE SHOULD CELEBRATE ALSO! (Luke 2:1-7)**

- A. The Lord moved upon the hearts of pagan governors to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem to fulfill prophecy. Remind yourself often of His Sovereignty over the affairs of men.
- B. God did not consult with Joseph and Mary about their willingness to be inconvenienced in being involved in His plan to bless the world. We should likewise be honored rather than complaining about what we are called to do.
- C. There are two different words translated “inn” in the New Testament. One (pandocheion) is used when there is a host, provisions, and apartments, and the other (kataluma) is an enclosure with walls used by travelers with animals. The second word describes the accommodations for Joseph and Mary, and led to our Savior being placed in a feeding trough. Since God Himself did not choose constant luxury, perhaps we should learn to be more thankful for whatever we have!

**III. SHEPHERDS WERE PREPARING THE SHEEP FOR THE SACRIFICES IN THE TEMPLE, WHEN THE GOOD SHEPHERD CAME TO BECOME THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE. (Luke 2:8-20)**

- A. Shepherds were looked down upon in Roman society, but highly esteemed among God and His people. Make sure you do not let the world tell you that your occupation determines your value. Love the Lord, love yourself, and love others for His glory. (Luke 2:8-9)
- B. The Good News is for everyone, not just a certain people group! The world needed a Savior, not a politician, philosopher, athlete, entertainer, engineer, businessman, etc. The only Savior is also Lord and Christ! (Luke 2:11)
- C. Babies were wrapped in swaddling cloths for protection. Sheep were wrapped in cloths in preparation for sacrifice. Only one baby that night would be found in a feeding trough. Would you have traveled those many miles to go look for Him? Are you looking for Him now?
- D. Heaven broke out in praise at the birth of Jesus the Christ. What is our problem with giving Him praise??
- E. Peace on earth was provided for everyone that would receive the gracious gift of God through Jesus Christ. God is not well pleased with everyone, and peace is conditional upon meeting Him on His terms. Do not confuse peace with not fighting at the moment.
- F. People that have seen Christ and worshipped Him should be quick to praise Him and tell others. What are you talking about this Christmas?

**WE WERE BORN IN ORDER THAT WE MIGHT LIVE. JESUS WAS BORN IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT DIE FOR US. YOU HAVE TO BE BORN AGAIN OR YOU WILL DIE FOREVER. WILL YOU WELCOME HIM AS YOUR CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOREVER?**

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