

Tis The Day Before Christmas

Love. Family. Friends. Children. Santa Claus. Giving and Receiving. Food. Lights and other decorations.

To many people, these words define Christmas. They are correct but miss the reason for the season.

To many, Christmas is about an infant born on a cold winter night and placed in a manger. It is about Joseph and Mary and Jesus. It's about shepherds in a field who are frightened when they are visited by angels. It is about three kings who traveled so far to give gifts to the newborn King (though Jesus was almost two years old when they arrived).

700 years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah (9:6) tells us "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

As our society has become more secular, it is apparent that Christmas has become more of a people day than a God day. Love, family, friends, children, Santa Claus, giving, food... all of these things should be part of our daily lives as Christians rather than something we celebrate for a day annually. Instead, our government removes Christmas scenes from public property, totally reversing the meaning of our founders who limited government from involving itself in religion rather than governing how it should be celebrated.

Hallmark Christmas movies are a good example of the move towards secularism. First, let me make clear that I love their holiday movies and, time permitting, have been known to watch them. It is so nice to get away from the sex, violence and filthy language so much a part of Millennial entertainment! Hallmark movies, however, portray Christmas as a season of miracles and romance (and it's true that wherever

there is hope, miracles happen) but there is little spiritual inference.

There is no doubt that Christmas is a time of miracles, but the great miracle we celebrate on December 25th has little to do with saving a romance. It has to do with saving people from themselves.

A sermon I listened to yesterday asks a crowd of people a simple question: "Do you believe human beings have dignity?" Everyone raised their hands. A second question followed: "Are people born with dignity?" Half of the hands were raised and the other half were not. The Pastor was pointing out that though people tend to agree with one another on big issues, the devil is truly in the details.

He pointed out that atheists and Darwinists (most people do not realize that Charles Darwin was a Christian at the time of his death) believe they came from a big pool of mud in which a couple of cells got together by chance and over millions of years eventually produced a human being. Atheists, he added, do not believe they are going anywhere after death... so they come from nothing and go nowhere. He is right that there is not much "dignity" in that scenario. So much for the idea of being born with it. It is something we earn as we develop our character.

To put it into language anyone can understand, Christmas is God in a manger.

That massive power that created the world and a universe became a human baby. He loved the human beings He had created in the beginning and saw that they needed help to understand what He expected of them if they were to share eternal life (heaven) with Him.

What is a baby born of a virgin? It is Total Innocence.

Atheists (and often agnostics) point out how totally

impossible it is for a virgin to become pregnant... yet have no problem accepting the idea that two cells in a huge puddle of mud once joined together and begin producing life. There have been a lot of big, long-lived mud puddles since the beginning and it hasn't happened again, but it is impossible to explain how some people think.

It has always puzzled me why people doubt the virgin birth. Many of those people believe in God... believe He created the world and the universe, but think He lacks the ability to impregnate a woman via the Holy Spirit. It strikes me as... almost funny it is so illogical.

So we have innocence and God, the only absolute eternal Truth, in a manger on Christmas Day. That is God's greatest gift to this world and those who populate it. That is what we celebrate four days after the date of the winter solstice.

Since no one recorded the date of the birth of Jesus Christ, no one really knows the precise day we should celebrate. Does it really matter? What we celebrate is the birth of innocent Truth that will sacrifice His life so we can have eternal life – and that should be celebrated every day of our lives. Our atheist and agnostic friends scoff at the December 25th date, pointing out to Christians that in the olden days it was the celebration of the winter solstice and they laughingly tell us we are so dumb we don't know we are celebrating a heathen holiday.

The truth is, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25th which happens to occur within less than a week of those who did (and may still) celebrate the winter solstice. Further, Jonathan Cahn, author of the blockbuster book [The Harbinger](#), has put out a video on [You Tube](#) that makes an excellent case for the birth date of our Lord and Savior as being April 1st.

If you are a /Christian, it matters not what day you celebrate His birth. If you get a bee in your bonnet and want to celebrate His birthday again in July, go for it!

It all gets back to John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but will have eternal life." That is what the greatest gift ever given was and it is the reason the celebration of Christ's birth involves giving. It is the reason it involves love, family and celebration. All are symbolic of God's greatest gift to His creations: We, the people.

Our Christmas carols would have us believe that the night Jesus was born, life was quiet and peaceful. It was not a "Silent Night" kind of world. Very much like Washington, D.C. today, it was a tremendous time of turbulence in Jerusalem. The Romans were not the kindest of rulers and their political system was corrupt – a bit like America today – and the angel's message to shepherds in the field, "good will toward men" does not suggest that people should show good will to one another. It tells us that God, through the birth of His Son, is showing good will towards men. It says there will be peace to men of good will. It does not say we should offer good will to those who would destroy us or our Christian way of life or to those who violate our laws.

There is a feeling of love in the air during the Christmas holidays. People appear to forget that they are beings who not only need to be loved, but need to love, as well. We seek love as a means of finding happiness. The spirit of the season gives us hope... and perhaps that is the thing that gets less significance in defining Christmas than it deserves.

Christ signifies hope... for love, for a giving spirit, for kindness and happiness – and, most important, for the possibility of eternal life. Christ is the only vehicle on which humankind can rely for the hope of eternal life. (I

realize the Jews will argue with me on this point.) Without hope, it is all but impossible for love to exist, let alone thrive. To receive love, we must also give it.

The same is true of kindness. To even be able to find love, kindness, happiness, et al, you must first have hope of being able to find them and then you must be able to give them. Every worthwhile thing in life is a two-way street. You give and you get. Without both, the result is merely an imitation of the real thing (or a selfish grabbing of these things for yourself without the ability to return them).

And that's why I believe the key to understanding the meaning of Christmas is to understand hope – which means learning to understand the message of Jesus Christ – and to behave in a way that invites it not only into your life, but into the lives of all the people in your world. With hope, anything is possible. To have it, we must believe in it.

When you walk through the mall to return the necktie you don't like or the scarf that is the wrong color for you, a worthwhile objective is to make three people – total strangers to you – smile. Smiles and hope go together like white on rice.

It's a great way, as Scrooge might say, to "keep Christmas in my heart every day of the year."

God bless and Merry Christmas! (And now please smile so I can meet my objective of three smiles from strangers every day!)

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