Outreach Center Network News Letter

December 2019

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***### A Note From Pastor Dave***

***Yes, it has been a while since you received this newsletter and contact from me. I and my family are and have been fine. The part time work at Abiding Savior and other pastoral items for Blind Ministry have taken up more time than usual. Of course that meant something else would not be done. I hope, pray and expect that the new year will find things in a slower mode.***

***Thanks for your prayers and support. Pastor Dave***

***###*** Redeemed and we know it

The story of Murdo Ewen MacDonald, a Scottish Preacher was written. He was confined to a German Stalag in World War II. Early one morning, an American prisoner shook him awake shouting, "The Scotsman wants to see you ‑‑ it's terribly important." MacDonald ran to The barbed wire fence separating the British and American camps. A prisoner named MacNeill, in touch with the BBC by underground, told him in Gaelic, "They have come."

It was June, 1944; Normandy had been successfully invaded. MacDonald ran back to tell the others: "They have come." Men shouted and jumped for joy, and ran outside to roll in the grass like happy puppies. It would be almost a year before the Allies liberated those prisoners, but not one day of it was the same as it had been before the good news came. They continued to face an "everyday" that was far beyond dull, and worse than anything we can imagine, but even their "ordinary time" had been redeemed, and they knew it!

The Good News for us is in another name ‑‑ Emmanuel, God is with us ‑‑ He has come! Whatever was wrong with the world before Christmas may still be wrong, and we are still fallen sinners, but the world has been redeemed and we are forgiven. All the old problems still require our struggling. Christmas is not just a one‑day holiday, But a 12‑day season. Likewise, it is not just a long‑past event, remembered annually. It is a long lasting effect, influencing our lives wherever we go and whatever we do.

In the fullness of time God sent his son to be born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law (Gal. 4:4) He redeemed you and me so that in the fullness of his time and the dullness and sharpness of our time, we might know him, his love for us, and that we are the link to those who are still trapped in time and eternity, in sin’s separation from God.

Christmas is not only about the wood of the cradle but the wood of the cross. Jesus was born innocent but died as one who is guilty. Therefore we who are truly guilty might be declared innocent.

Thank God that he entered time. Now may we use our time to tell others. We are redeemed and we know it

Pastor Dave

### Should Christians celebrate Christmas?

The debate about whether or not Christians should celebrate Christmas has been raging for centuries. There are equally sincere and committed Christians on both sides of the issue, each with multiple reasons why or why not Christmas should be celebrated in Christian homes. But what does the Bible say? Does the Bible give clear direction as to whether Christmas is a holiday to be celebrated by Christians?

First, let’s look at the reasons why some Christians do not celebrate Christmas. One argument against Christmas is that the traditions surrounding the holiday have origins in paganism. Searching for reliable information on this topic is difficult because the origins of many of our traditions are so obscure that sources often contradict one another. Bells, candles, holly, and

yuletide/yule

decorations are mentioned in the history of pagan worship, but the use of such in one’s home certainly does not indicate a return to paganism. While there are definitely pagan roots to some traditions, there are many more traditions associated with the true meaning of Christmas—the birth of the Savior of the world in Bethlehem. Bells are played to ring out the joyous news, candles are lit to remind us that Christ is the Light of the world (John 1:4-9), a star is placed on the top of a Christmas tree to remember the Star of Bethlehem, and gifts are exchanged to remind us of the gifts of the Magi to Jesus, the greatest gift of God to mankind.

Another argument against Christmas, especially having a Christmas tree, is that the Bible forbids bringing trees into our homes and decorating them. The passage often cited is Jeremiah 10:1-16, but this passage refers to cutting down trees, chiseling the wood to make an idol, and then decorating the idol with silver and gold for the purpose of bowing down before it to worship it (see also Isaiah 44:9-18). The passage in Jeremiah cannot be taken out of its context and used to make a legitimate argument against Christmas trees.

Christians who choose to ignore Christmas point to the fact that the Bible doesn’t give us the date of Christ’s birth, which is certainly true. December 25 may not be even close to the time Jesus was born, and arguments on both sides are legion, some relating to climate in Israel, the practices of shepherds in winter, and the dates of Roman census-taking. None of these points are without a certain amount of conjecture, which brings us back to the fact that the Bible doesn’t tell us when Jesus was born. Some see this as proof positive that God didn’t want us to celebrate the birth, while others see the Bible’s silence on the issue as tacit approval.

Some Christians say that since the world celebrates Christmas, although it is becoming more and more politically correct to refer to it as “the holidays”, Christians should avoid it. But that is the same argument made by false religions that deny Christ altogether, as well as cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses who deny His deity. Those Christians who do celebrate Christmas often see the occasion as an opportunity to proclaim Christ as “the reason for the season” among the nations and to those trapped in false religions.

As we have seen, there is no legitimate scriptural reason not to celebrate Christmas. At the same time, there is no biblical mandate to celebrate it, either. In the end, of course, whether or not to celebrate Christmas is a personal decision. Whatever Christians decide to do regarding Christmas, their views should not be used as a club with which to beat down or denigrate those with opposing views, nor should either view be used as a badge of honor inducing pride over celebrating or not celebrating. As in all things, we seek wisdom from Him who gives it liberally to all who ask (James 1:5) and accept one another in Christian love and grace, regardless of our views on Christmas.

### Christmas Alphabet

A is for Angels, appearing so bright, Telling of Jesus that first Christmas night.

B is for Bethlehem, crowded and old, Birthplace of Jesus by prophet foretold.

C is for Cattle, their manger His bed, There in the stable where He laid His head.

D is for David and his ancient throne, Promised forever to Jesus alone. E is for East, where shone the bright star, Which Magi on camels followed afar.

F is for Frankincense, with myrrh and gold, Brought by the Wise Men as Matthew has told.

G is for God, who from heaven above, Sent down to mankind the Son of His love.

H is for Herod, whose murderous scheme, Was told to Joseph in a nocturnal dream.

I is for Immanuel, "God with us," For Christ brought man back to the Father's house.

J is for Joseph so noble and just, Obeying God's word with absolute trust.

K is for King. A true king He would be, Coming in power and authority. L is for Love that He brought down to earth, That night in the stable in lowly birth.

M is for Mary, His mother so brave, Counting God faithful and mighty to save.

N is for Night, when the Savior was born, For nations of earth and people forlorn.

O is for Omega, meaning "the last;" He's eternal: present, future and past.

P is for Prophets, when living on earth, Foretold His redemption and blessed birth.

Q is for Quickly, as shepherds who heard, Hastened to act on that heavenly word.

R is for Rejoice. The sorrow of sin, Is banished forever when Jesus comes in.

S is for Savior. To be this He came; The angel of God assigned Him His name.

T is for Tidings related to all, Telling of Him who was born in a stall.

U is for Us, to whom Jesus was given, To show us the way and take us to heaven.

V is for Virgin, foretold by the sage, God's revelation on prophecy's page.

W is for Wonderful, His works and His words, The King of all Kings, the Lord of all Lords.

X is for Christ. It's X in the Greek, Anointed, Messiah, mighty, yet meek.

Y is for Yes, called God's Yes in His Word; God's answer to all is Jesus the Lord.

Z is for Zeal as it burned in Christ's heart. Lord, by thy Spirit to us zeal impart.

### Christmas Trivia

How many of these do you know?

For your convenience, each answer immediately follows its associated question.

1.  In A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, what did Dickens originally name Tiny Tim?

Tiny Fred

2.  Whose eyes are made of coal?

“Frosty the Snowman"

3.  In the song "Do You Hear What I Hear", what is dancing in the night?

A star

4.  How does St. Nick get back up the chimney (2 answers)?

Laying a finger aside his nose, and giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.

5.  What plant do you stand under, to kiss someone?

Mistletoe

6.  What does Alvin (of the Chipmunks) want for Christmas?

A hula-hoop

7.  What is the name of the little girl in "The Nutcracker"?

Clara

8.  What is the original name for the poem "The Night Before Christmas"?

A Visit from St. Nicholas

9.  Who was the first president to put a Christmas tree on the front lawn of the White House?

Calvin Coolidge

10. What are the names of the 3 Kings?

Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar

11. What did General George Washington do on December 25, 1776?

Cross the Delaware River

12. What country created egg nog?

The United States

13. What is the name for a paper bag with a candle in it?

Luminary

14. What are the 2 most popular tree toppers?

Angel and a star

15. What were used as the first Christmas lights, to decorate most people's Christmas trees?

Candles

### Final Thoughts

In upcoming issues we can and will look at many of the same topics as well as others. If you have questions, thoughts or suggestions, please send them to me or post them on the blind ministry email list.

Pastor Dave