**CHRISTMAS IS AN OPPORTUNITY**

This is the time of year when we’re usually treated to the customary barrage of sermons and articles telling us that Christmas is an unauthorized Holy Day (Col.3:17; 2Jn.9). We are reminded of some of the myths of Christmas, such as: the “three” wise men (and their names), or that they were at the manger along with the shepherds. In truth, we don’t know how many there were, nor their names; and they most assuredly were NOT at the manger. In fact, Jesus may have been as much as two years old when the wise men visited (Mt.2:1-2,7,11,16). And, of course, “the biggie” – that He wasn’t born on December 25th. Indeed, I have done my share of such teaching, and will likely do so in the future, because it is the truth; and the truth must be preached (2Tm.4:2).

But this year, allow me to share a personal story from many years ago. At that time, I was a brash young preacher, eager to show the denominations just how wrong they were about nearly everything(never mind about actually winning their hearts for Jesus). Then one day, I was speaking to an older brother in the Lord, whom I respected very much. I was talking about how pitiful it was that so many had no clue regarding the truth about Christmas, when he said something I’ll never forget. I can only paraphrase his actual words, because the years have caused them to fade to some extent. But basically, he said, “I don’t worry too much about Christmas, because at least for one moment each year, the whole world knows about Jesus!”

Well, I was flabbergasted! Indeed, I was so troubled that I had to “tell on him” to a preacher friend of mine. I was looking for validation, and an effective response, so I could put my old friend in his place. *Much to my surprise, the preacher agreed with my older brother in Christ!* I have often thought of those conversations; and with the passing of time, have come to appreciate the wisdom given to me by those men. No, they were not trying to tell me that it was OK to bind an unauthorized Holy Day upon others. But they were trying to get me to see a positive instead of a negative with respect to Christmas.

Think about it! Of all the holidays throughout the year, THIS is one where Jesus simply MUST be dealt with – one way or another. The very name, “Christmas,” puts the name of Christ right everyone’s face! Radio stations play carols which tell of His birth, and His mission to save man from sin (cf. Mt.1:21). Shopping malls are filled with references to Christmas, Christ, Nativity scenes, and other such things. Conversely, unbelievers fight relentlessly to remove such displays from public life. Some stores train their employees NOT to say, “Merry Christmas” – lest we offend some Jew, Muslim, or atheist. Some schools ban religious Christmas songs from their “Holiday Concerts.” Yes, the proverbial “War on Christmas” has been in full swing for a long time! ***And right here, when everyone’s mind is on Jesus, is our golden opportunity to do something positive for the Master!***

Throughout the year, Jesus is ignored; but at the end of the year, EVERYBODY must deal with Jesus! The atheist, Muslim, and Jew each must decide how to handle the holidays. And they don’t all handle it the same way! For example, some atheists will observe the day non-religiously; while others refuse any participation whatsoever. Our denominational friends will, of course, pay homage to “the tradition of men,” with their Christmas pageants and cantatas (Mt.15:7-9; Col.2:6-8). And those of us who are simply Christians will busy ourselves in trying to correct their errors – hopefully without sounding so obnoxious that no one listens!

Why not turn this time of year into an opportunity to ask people: ***“What are YOU going to do with Jesus?”*** You see, He is the one Man who changed the world! Someone has said, “He built a bridge to Heaven with two boards, and three nails.” He has so influenced the world that we measure time from His birth (BC versus AD). The fact is: Jesus simply cannot be ignored! He is my Lord (Ac.2:36), my God (Jn.20:28), and my Savior (Mt.1:21); as a matter of fact, He is everything to me! Ultimately, each of us will face Him in judgment (Jn.12:48).

The bottom line is this: You can deal with Jesus now, or deal with Him later; BUT YOU WILL DEAL WITH HIM! (2Cor.5:10). If you have been putting Jesus out of your mind and life, why not give Him serious consideration – or even reconsideration? If those of us who believe in Christ are wrong, and there truly is no God, we will never know it; for we shall just pass quietly into non-existence. On the other hand, if those who don’t believe in Christ are wrong, they will lose their soul (Jn.8:24). That makes it a question worth pursuing! The evidence is overwhelming that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Please examine all of the prophecies, as well as the eyewitness testimony – all offered by men who gave their lives in His service. We would be glad to help!

--Lanny Smith