

Class # 13
“Christmas Study”

A) HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS

In the U.S. we have incorporated many traditions and rituals from many nations due to our melting pot atmosphere

- 1) There is no time given in scripture and you don't find the celebration of the day as a NT practice
- 2) Dec 25 (as Christmas) started 1,662 years ago when Pope Julius I decreed the previously a pagan holiday as a holy day of “Christ’s Mass.”
 - a) Constantine’s conversion lead to Christianizing maybe pagan practices.
 - b) Pope Gregory the Great wanted to transform pagan customs and said, “*It is impossible to cut off everything at once, because he who strives to ascend to the highest place rises by degrees or steps, not leaps...*” And so steps and degrees it was...
- 3) Dec 25 = Pagan birthday celebration of Mithra, the Iranian (Persian) god of mystery
- 4) Dec 25 = Last day of week long celebration practiced in Rome called ‘Saturnalia’ day of Invincible Sun
- 5) A day of dancing; drinking and setting slaves free
- 6) Priests of medieval Europe tried to drown out the merrymakers by clanging the church bells on Christmas Eve
- 7) In Italy (Rome) ‘*carolares*’ would dress as wild animals. By the 14th century they were singing Christmas carols from door to door.
- 8) In 1647 England the Puritans outlawed Christmas. The commoners practiced it anyway and the mayors, marshals and sheriffs went around burning all the greens.
- 9) Mistletoe was an integral part of Norse, German and Celtic ceremonies. If two of the opposite sex met under the mistletoe and didn't kiss they would suffer ill fortune.
- 10) Holly which today speaks to many of Christ’s crown of thorns and blood (from red berries) was then thought to be prophetic and when placed under your pillow you would dream of your future.
- 11) Christmas tree; Martin Luther or Saint Boniface

a) Boniface cut down a Druid sacred oak in the 700's in an attempt to convert pagans to Christianity. When he cut it down it crushed everything in its path except for a tiny fir sapling that he said represented a miracle and the Christ child.

b) Luther = lights to represents stars of heaven

c) decorated after children go to bed as a picture of a marvelous transformation (Germany)

d) In New England prior to Revolutionary War paper and wood lighted pyramids were the rage. Many 12 -20 foot ones were placed in the Boston Common.

e) Evergreen has long been a symbol of immortality in Scandinavia. They would bring it home to appease the spirits.

12) WORSLING OF THE FRUIT TREES

a) splashing cups of cider on trees hoping for good fruit in the following year (from England)

13) MANY BELIEVED ANIMALS COULD TALK ON CHRISTMAS EVE, INCLUDING New Englanders

a) Thomas Hardy poem

14) SAINT NICOLAS

a) Italian Charismatic bishop of Catholic Church

b) Parents died young leaving a small fortune

c) Gave a bag of gold to a distressed father who had no dowry three times the third time he threw it down the chimney

d) Honored in northern Europe 'Klaus = Nick..'

e) Said to fly through the air dropping candy

down chimneys or rewarding kids for good deeds.

15) ELVES & REINDEER: Who knows & who cares

a) Middle of 19th century Americans changed this Dutch figure into a fat, jolly elf with red clothes.

b) It was American Clement C. Moore who created modern Santa Klaus with poem "*Night*

Before Christmas”

16) ARE THESE TRADITIONS WRONG?

a) Have as much liberty to incorporate them as we have to reject them.

b) Today 2/3 do not consider Christmas religious

17) GREATEST TRADITION OF ALL: Faith, Hope & Love and the greatest of these is love!

WE HAVE COME TO WORSHIP (Matthew 2:2)

(I) PURPOSE OF HIS COMING (10)

1) TO **DIE ON THE CROSS** BRINGING GLORY TO GOD AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN TO MEN

John 12:27 *"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.*

2) HE CAME TO **SAVE SINNERS**

1 Tim. 1:15 *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.*

3) TO GIVE US **ABUNDANT LIFE**

John 10:10 *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

4) SO THAT WE WOULD NOT **PERISH**, BUT LIVE

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 have eternal life.*

5) TO SHOW US ON EARTH **THE FATHER**

John 11:27 *"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."*

6) TO BE A **LIGHT**; RELAESE US FROM DARKNESS

John 12:46 *I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.*

7) TO TESTIFY TO **THE TRUTH**

John 18:37 *"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.*

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

8) TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST

Matthew 18:11 *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

9) CAME TO BE A PREACHER

Luke 4:43 *But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."*

10) A TEACHER SENT FROM GOD

John 3:2 *He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."*

(II) THE EVENTS SURROUNDING CHRIST'S BIRTH (The Original Christmas Story)

A) INCREASE IN SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITY

(after 400 Silent Years)

- 1) Increase of Angelic Activity
 - a) To Mary
 - b) To Zecharias (father of John the Baptist)
 - c) To Joseph
 - d) To shepherds

- 2) An increase in dreams and visions
 - a) To Joseph
 - b) To Magi

- 3) An increase in prophetic
 - a) Anna a prophetess
 - b) Simeon knew he would live to see the Messiah

- 4) Signs, Wonders and Miracles
 - a) Not the least being the Star of Bethlehem
 - b) How about a virgin birth?

B) RAPID FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

- 1) Biblical Prophecy is Unique in it's fulfillment
 - a) Over 300 prophecies concerning his life

C) EVENTS SIMILAR TO THE SECOND COMING

1) Billy Graham in his book "The Holy Spirit" says, "As indicated by the prophets Hosea and Joel, as we approach the end of the age we may expect miracle to increase"

- 2) And I would add the fulfillment of prophecy.....
....where are we? a few weeks in Mark 13....
....the birth of Jesus the beginning of the last days

(III) THE RESPONSES TO HIS COMING

A) Cover the gamut

B) MAGI

- 1) Saw the star and came to worship
- 2) Overjoyed
- 3) Bowed down when they worshipped
- 4) They gave valuable gifts

C) KING HEROD

- 1) Disturbed
- 2) Looked for the child but for another reason
- 3) Furious with the Magi

D) MARY

- 1) Overjoyed
- 2) Humbled

E) JOSEPH

- 1) Obedient to what he didn't understand

F) YOU AND ME?

(IV) ISAIAH 9:2, 6-8

A) GOVERNMENT WILL BE ON HIS SHOULDERS

- 1) Kingdom Rule and Reign
- 2) All authority

B) WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

- 1) Advice and Direction
- 2) Policy and Consultation

C) MIGHTY GOD

- 1) Exalted; Powerful Above All Others
- 2) Omnipotent; Omniscience; Omnipresent

D) EVERLASTING FATHER

- 1) Care; Concern; Provision
- 2) Father: A man who has begotten a child

E) PRINCE OF PEACE

- 1) Peace with God
- 2) Peace with Men
- 3) Peace within Self
- 4) Peace among Nations (It's coming!)

CONCLUSIONS:

(1) God in Christ (Incarnation) did not come to take away all our problems -political or otherwise-but to be with us in them

(2) Thank God for His Indescribable Christmas gift....Share Him with your world!

