

The Old Paths

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“Christmas: Separating Myth From Truth”

Jarrod Jacobs

Every December, folks the world-over engage in perpetuating a myth. This myth is the so-called “Christmas Story.”

This myth says that Jesus Christ was born on the night of December 25th to a virgin named Mary, and her husband, Joseph. They tried to get a room in Bethlehem for the night, but there was no room for them in the inn, so she had her baby in a stable, and laid him in a manger. Soon after, three wise men and some shepherds, who had been following a special star, appeared at the stable to worship the Christ-child. Jesus was special because He came to bring peace to the nations. Therefore, all of humanity needs to stop on December 25th and worship God and remember the birth of the Christ-child. Remembering can include singing “Happy birthday” to Jesus, offering a prayer, or any religiously-minded thing one would like to do in His honor.

The above story has some basic facts correct. For example, the fact that Jesus was born into this world is true (Matt. 1; Lk. 2). His mother was a virgin named Mary (Isa. 7:14; Lk. 1:26-35), and she was married to a man named Joseph (Matt. 1:18; Lk. 1:27). Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the days when Rome ruled the world (Matt. 2:1; Lk. 2:1-7), and He would eventually die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (Jn.

1:29).

The details beyond this basic truth of Christ’s birth are where the myth begins. Sadly, many of my brethren are falling for the fantasy as well. What do I mean by “myth” and “fantasy”? Let us take a close look at what men call the “Christmas story” and see what myths are being told today.

Myth #1: Calling The Event Of Christ’s Birth The “Christmas Story”.

TRUTH: The word “Christmas” is an Old English word which means “The Mass of Christ”. It had its beginnings, not with the Bible, but with the Catholic church. When looking back into history, we find that “there is no month of the year not assigned by some writer as that of Christ’s birth” (St. Louis Register, [Catholic publication], Nov. 11, 1955). Historic study also shows that a celebration of the birth of Christ was not celebrated until the 3rd or 4th century (The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, Vol. III, p. 47; Walker Wiliston, A History of the Christian Church, p. 169). In other words, this celebration did not have its origin in the New Testament! Celebrating Christ’s birthday was not done by the apostles, nor taught by the apostles, but began centuries after the apostles died.

The decision to celebrate a birthday for Christ on December

25th was made by the Catholic church. Liberius, a bishop in the Catholic church (considered by Catholics to be one of the early Catholic popes), ordered December 25th to be adopted as the date for the celebration of the birth of Christ in the year 354 A.D. (World Book Encyclopedia; Encyclopedia Britannica; Collier’s Encyclopedia). “December 25 was already a festive day for the sun god Mithra and appealed to the Christians as an appropriate date to commemorate the birth of Jesus, the ‘Light of the World.’” (The Lincoln Library of Essential Information).

Myth #2: Jesus Was Born On December 25th.

TRUTH: The exact day of Christ’s birth was never revealed by God. As we saw above, the Roman Catholics declared that December 25th is Christ’s birthday. However, when studying Scripture, the only clue we are given concerning a time of year for the Lord’s birth is the record Luke gives us when he speaks of the time of taxing or census that the Romans did, as well as the fact that the shepherds were in the fields in this time of year (Lk. 2:1-8). Based upon these facts, some have conjectured that Christ’s birth was in the spring rather than December. Nevertheless, anyone who wishes to state with any certainty what day Christ was born is perpetuating a myth. God never revealed to man this aspect of Christ’s life on earth (Deut. 29:29; I Pet. 4:11).

Myth #3: The Shepherds Followed A Star To Find Jesus.

Some folks leave us with the impression that all parties interested in finding Christ followed a star to find Jesus the night He was born. **TRUTH:** The shepherds were not even looking for the Mes-

siah when they were told Christ was born *"in the city of David"*. They were busy watching their flock when Christ was born. The angels said in order to find the Messiah, they needed to find a baby lying in a manger and *"wrapped in swaddling clothes"* (Lk. 2:11-12). After this visit from the angels, the shepherds then went to find the Christ, and found Him as the angel had said (Lk. 2:15-17). The shepherds, though, never followed a star to find the Lord.

To be continued next week, Lord willing....

The Few

Author Unknown

Some assemble with the church
just for the walk,
Some go to laugh and talk.

Some go the time to spend,
Some go to meet a friend.

Some go for speculation,
Some go for observation.

Some go for sins to cover,
Some go to meet a lover.

Some go to doze and nod,
A few go to worship God.

Editor's Note:

I found this poem in a book of old lessons and writings from a dear friend of mine and thought it was worth sharing in the bulletin. Jesus said that those who worship God *"must"* do so *"in spirit and in truth"* (Jn. 4:24), for these are the kind of people God is looking for to worship Him. Let us consider our reasons for being here today. Our assembling is not for "free baby-sitting," nor is it "social hour." This is not an opportunity for business deals, nor is it simply a way to "kill time." We are assembled to worship our King and Creator. Let us remember this as we worship God today!

The Gospel-Soaked Prepositions Of Philippians 4:4-7

Jason Hardin, Columbus, OH

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:4-7)

You've read it before. But slow down. Meditate upon these words. Use the gospel-soaked prepositions as a pathway to worship.

- True, enduring, priceless joy is available IN the Lord.
- As one who has discovered this matchless treasure, let your reasonableness be known TO everyone.
- The Lord is AT hand.
- Do not be anxious ABOUT anything.
- Your requests matter TO God.

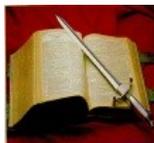
- He invites you to approach him BY prayer and supplication.
- As you approach, IN everything let your heart be filled WITH thanksgiving.
- Armed with this perspective, the peace OF God will guard your heart and your mind.
- These blessings, which surpass all understanding, are available IN Christ Jesus.

Editor's Note:

I do not know brother Hardin, but I believe he made some very good observations in this article, beginning with the fact that in Bible study, we need to SLOW DOWN! Psalm 1:1-2 encourages us to *"meditate"* on God's word. The blessed man is one who does this very thing. To *"meditate"* requires us giving time to God's word to truly appreciate what is being said and why. The end result of such study results in something like the above, where we can see the power of God's word and its emphasis on our lives in the very PREPOSITIONS that the Holy Spirit used to convey the message.

May we be a people who slow down and appreciate the words being used to convey the message of salvation to us and to the entire world!

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