

SPECIAL DAYS - CHRISTMAS

Title: **“THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRITY”**Scripture: **Hebrews 1:1-4**

Why do we celebrate Christmas? It seems like a foolish question to ask, doesn't it? But does everyone celebrating Christmas know what the event is that we celebrate? Unfortunately, the answer is, "no, not everyone knows the true meaning of Christmas." A public school teacher in California asked a class of 31 children averaging 12 years of age, "Why do we celebrate Christmas?" Twelve knew the true meaning of Christmas, nineteen did not.

A man was walking along the street in Chicago and passed a lady standing before a manger scene in a department store window. He overheard her exclaim, as he passed by, "Can you beat that? Now the church is trying to horn in on Christmas!"

Let's have a quiz - the real meaning of Christmas is embodied in which of the following: Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer? Santa Clause? A Christmas tree? Or a Person born 2,000 years ago? Your final answer is? _____.

The commercialization of Christmas obscures the Person whose birthday we celebrate. The Christmas Celebrity is Jesus Christ! We cannot afford to remain silent and allow unbelievers to steal from our children and our grandchildren the true meaning of Christmas and the joy that comes with the celebration of the birth of our Saviour, Who is the Celebrity of Christmas!

Hebrews chapter one portrays the Celebrity of Christmas. This is one of the strongest Christological sections of scripture in the New Testament:

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” (Hebrews 1:1-4)

Whenever I attempt to describe the Christmas Celebrity, Jesus Christ, I feel like someone standing beside the ocean with the impossible task of dipping the ocean dry a handful at a time. When trying to extol the excellencies of the Son of God all I seem to be able to do is wade into the sea of His sublime beauty and glory, dip up a handful of adjectives, then wade ashore and pour them out in a feeble attempt to describe the One Who is the Fairest Of Ten Thousand and then, plunge again into that unfathomable sea of divine glory, while all the time the sea seems to grow larger and larger and my hands smaller and smaller!

No mind in any race or realm of mankind possesses the capacity to describe or the capability to declare all the glories of the Son Of God. Solomon, the wisest of the wise said, *“the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him.”* (I Kings 8:27)

You may search literature and lexicons, dictionaries and declarations, history and homilies, encyclicals and encyclopedias, only to discover, as the hymn writer said,

*“No mortal can with Him compare,
Among the sons of men;
Fairer is He than all the fair,
That fill the heavenly train.”*

in Hebrews Chapter one there are several snapshots of the Christmas Celebrity. First,

JESUS CHRIST IS DIVINE ARTICULATION. Hebrews 1:1-2a

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son”

God spoke in the past to patriarchs and prophets. Now He speaks in an entirely different way. He spoke His Message to us in flesh and blood, in His Son! To articulate is to communicate one's thoughts. What does God think about us sinners? The answer is not left to our imaginations. God's thoughts toward us are expressed in His Son. He *“....has in these last days spoken to us “by His Son.”* In the original it reads, *“in Son.”* The meaning is not that Jesus Christ came to speak verbally God's message (even though He did do that in His ministry), but the meaning here in this verse is that Jesus Christ was God's message!

He is the full and final revelation of the Self-revealing God; the full expression and perfect reflection of God's heart. He is the personification of God's thoughts. God spoke His thoughts – and His thoughts became flesh and blood. God spoke the world into existence; He spoke and there was light; again God spoke and His message was encapsulated in His Son, Jesus Christ who is the Light of the world!

“In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1) In His pre-incarnate state He was The Word. However, a thought unexpressed is a thought unknown. Therefore, *“The Word was made flesh.”* (John 1:14) That is The Message - The Message took on flesh! The Incarnation means “enfleshment.” The Message is a Person – Divine Articulation! He is The Message of grace and The Message of truth! (John 1:14) He is both the Messenger and The Message.

Christmas is saying to us, “Listen, God Speaks!” In the Person of the Christmas Celebrity God speaks: in a humble birth, a holy life, a horrible death, a hallelujah resurrection, a heavenly throne! Listen! God speaks! On the Mount of Transfiguration God the Father said, *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; Hear Him!”* This is the Christmas Celebrity – this is the meaning of Christmas – God's Message to mankind in human form.

JESUS CHRIST IS DIVINE ARCHITECT. Heb. 1:2b

“.... through whom also He made the worlds”

The word “made” in the Greek is “*poieo*” and denotes all activity involved in bringing the ages and the universe into being. God is a Builder. All of God's projects have design. Where there

is design there is a Designer! Jesus Christ is the Designer, the Architect. He is the Architect of the Ages. What has he designed and built?

He Designed And Built The Universe. v. 2

Col. 1:16 tells us: *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”*

What a universe! It operates like clockwork. The psalm writer said: *“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”* (Psalm 8:3-4)

He Designed And Built Our Bodies.

Again the psalm writer said concerning his body, *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”* (Ps 139:13-14)

There is, in the verse, the word *“created”* again. Also, Colossians tells us that, *“by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”* (Col.1:16) The word *“created”* is used of an artist and his work. What works of art our bodies are! The brain, the ear, the heart, the circulatory system etc. Admittedly, the works of art may be getting a little old and worn but they are the handiwork of Jesus Christ, the Christmas Celebrity!

He Designed And Is Building The Church.

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”*

He has been building His Church for over 2000 years. Men scoff at the church, criticize it, slander it, but Ephesians 5:27 says that The Builder, the Lord Jesus, sees the His church as *“a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”*

He Designed And Is Building Heaven.

In John 14:6 Jesus said, *“I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again...”* In the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we are given glimpses of heaven, and what a place it is! As children we used to sing the chorus:

*“Heaven is a wonderful place
Filled with glory and grace;
I’m going to see my Savior’s face
Heaven is a wonderful,
Heaven is a glorious place.”*

And it is because Jesus Christ is the Architect and Builder!

Since He designed and built the universe, the human body, the church and heaven, don’t you

think He can design and build your life, your family, your church, your business? The Celebrity of Christmas is God's Articulated Message and Architect of the Ages. Furthermore:

JESUS CHRIST IS THE DIVINE APPEARANCE. Hebrews 1:3a

"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person ..."

God appeared in human flesh the night of the nativity. *"Once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."* (Heb.9:26) The angel announced to Joseph, *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,"* which is translated, *"God with us."* (Matt. 1:23) To the Philippians, Paul wrote that He took upon Himself *"the form of a bondservant"* and that He came *"in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."* (Phil.2:7,8)

Jesus Christ is God in flesh! The description of Him in Hebrews 1:3 could never be applied to any other human being. *"Christ is to the Father what the rays of the sun are to the sun. He is the radiance of God's glory. It is impossible to separate the rays from the sun, it is also impossible to separate Christ's glory from the nature of God."* (Wiersbe) He is *"the express image of His person."* Colossians 1:15 states, *"He is the image of the invisible God."* The Son perfectly mirrors the Father; He is His exact representation. He, God Visible, describes God Invisible.

Jesus Christ is both the Noun of Nouns and the Adjective of The Almighty. A noun is a person, place or thing. Jesus Christ is the exact representation of the very substance of God. When we see Christ we see the very glory of God, *"the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person."*

An adjective describes a noun. Jesus Christ is also the Adjective of The Almighty! Just as John The Baptist was a sign-post pointing to Jesus saying, *"Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world,"* so Jesus was a sign-post pointing to the Father. He said, *"He that has seen me has seen the Father."* (John 14:9) He is the very image of the Father, the Adjective of the Almighty - the Celebrity of Christmas!

The pastor of the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, California, Dr. James A. Francis, preached a sermon in 1926 in which he included the following description of the Celebrity of Christmas. He said:

"Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where he worked in a carpenter's shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place he was born.

While He was still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends deserted him. He was turned over to his enemies, and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled

for the only piece of property he had - his coat. When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure for much of the human race. All the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever sailed, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of people on this earth as powerfully as this One Solitary Life."

That is the Celebrity Whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. He resided temporarily on earth but He wants to reside eternally in our hearts. Does He live in you?

JESUS CHRIST IS DIVINE ATONEMENT. Hebrews 1:3b

"when He had by Himself purged our sins"

Why did God take on human flesh? Why was He born into our sinful world? Hebrews 10:5-7 tells us why: *"When He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you had no pleasure.' Then I said, 'Behold, I have come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, to do Your will, O God.' "*

The root meaning of the word "atonement" means to "cover, cancel, purge away; to restore to harmony; to be reconciled." Mankind, through the result of the Fall, is in a state of disunity, disharmony and at a distance from God because of our sin. It was because of the cross-work of Christ that atonement for our sins was made thereby accomplishing reconciliation. Jesus Christ *"by Himself purged our sins."* Paul wrote, *"We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."* (Rom. 5:11)

I wonder how many people who celebrate Christmas connect the cradle with the cross? The cradle without the cross is a travesty! The manger without Mount Calvary would be a failure! The babe in the manger grew up to be the body nailed to the cross for our sins. This is the real reason for the season. Christmas means that sin has been atoned for and our sins can be forgiven!

JESUS CHRIST IS DIVINE ADVOCATE. Hebrews 1:3

"When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Where is Jesus Christ, the Christmas Celebrity today? He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God and *"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."* (Heb.7:25)

The ministering priest in the Old Testament never sat. They were always busy offering sacrifices for the sins of the people. Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest and *"When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."* A seated priest indicates a finished work! When Jesus Christ bowed His head upon His pulse-less breast and said, *"It is finished,"* the work of redemption had been accomplished.

What is the Celebrity of Christmas presently doing? He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, there as our Advocate - our Intercessor. 1st John 2:1 tells us, *“And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* He advocates our access to God on the grounds of His atonement for us. Therefore, we can *“come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Heb. 4:16) Christmas means we can pray! Christmas means we have an Advocate at the Father’s right hand Who represents us.

CONCLUSION

There is more to Christmas than tinsel, trees and trimmings. The Christmas Celebrity, Jesus Christ, is not a commodity to be sold but a Gift to be received!

Christmas is celebrated by believers because:

- Christmas is God’s message in Jesus Christ;
- Christmas is Jesus Christ the Creator becoming a Creature;
- Christmas is Jesus Christ revealing God the Father;
- Christmas is the birth of the Saviour who atoned for our sins;
- Christmas is a condescension - Christ coming down and it is about an Elevation, Christ going back to Heaven as our Advocate.

Just because unbelievers and even some Christians abuse the celebration of Christmas does not mean that we cannot celebrate Christmas for the right reasons and in the right way. How do we do that?

- By keeping Christ central;
- By seeing Christ for Who He is, God in the flesh;
- By seeing Christ for what He has done and is doing for us;
- By singing His praises in family gatherings and church settings;
- By giving gifts for the right reason – because God gave His best to us!

Merry Christian Christmas to you!

And

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

(II Cor.9:15)

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