

“UNDERSTANDING THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS”

Satilla Baptist Church
1452 Satilla Road, Wray, GA 31798
Sunday AM Service, December 16th 2012
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I. INTRODUCTION

- a. Perhaps the most overused phrase of the Christmas Season is “The True Meaning of Christmas.”
- b. But what is “The True Meaning of Christmas” and how can we find it?
- c. The Bible gives us some clues as to what Christmas is all about it:
 - i. *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for **he shall save his people from their sins.** 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, **which being interpreted is, God with us.** Matt 1:21-23 (KJV)*
 - ii. **To Save us from our Sins**
 - iii. **To Bring God to us**
 - iv. *And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,** 19 **To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.** 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, **This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.** Luke 4:17-21 (KJV)*
 - v. **Preach the Gospel to the Poor**
 - vi. **Heal the Brokenhearted**
 - vii. **Preach Deliverance to the Captives**
 - viii. **Recovering of Sight to the Blind**
 - ix. **Set at Liberty them that are bruised**
 - x. **Preach the Acceptable year of the Lord (allusion to the Year of Jubilee, the 50th year when all debts were forgiven, land was restored, slaves were set free)**
- d. Not all would receive the “True Meaning of Christmas” that first Christmas 2000 years ago. Who were they and why did they not receive it?

II. THREE WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

- a. **The Selfish: Herod the Great** MATT. 2:1-12,16-18
 - i. **His Description**
 1. first of several rulers of this Herodian dynasty
 2. ruled from 34-4BC

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3. a descendant of the Edomites from the line of Esau (sold his birthright)
4. Ruthless, cruel and cunning.
5. Upon his death he had all the prominent citizens of Jerusalem killed so that the people would weep when he died.
6. Loved grand building projects, (rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem completed after his death) Most of the ruins you see in Jerusalem date back to his day.

ii. His Discomfort

1. (v.3) The First Christmas did not bring joy or fellowship, but discomfort to Herod. Position was threatened. The status quo was about to be changed and He wanted things to remain as they were

iii. His Deception

1. (v.8) Covered up his true motives. He did the right thing for the wrong reason.

iv. His Destruction

1. (v.16-18) No one crueller than a selfish person. Only sees the world as they are affected. Not how others are affected.

b. The Self Righteous: Chief Priests, Pharisees and Scribes MATT 15:7-9; MATT 23:23-33 (*Religious People of Jesus' Day*)

i. Backward Worship

1. *"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. Matt 15:7-8 (NKJV)*
2. *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' " Matt 15:9 (NKJV)*

ii. Blind Legalism

1. *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 "Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Matt 23:23-24 (NKJV)*

iii. Black Hearts.

1. *25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful*

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outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Matt 23:25-28 (NKJV)

iv. Blamed Others

1. *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 "and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' 31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. 33 "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Matt 23:29-33 (NKJV)*

c. The Self-Satisfied: (The Innkeeper) Luke 2:7

- i. Nothing evil or bad about him, he just didn't have room for Jesus.
- ii. He had no Room.
 1. Only the empty can be filled.
- iii. He was not Hungry
 1. Only the hungry can be filled with the Bread of Life
- iv. He was not Thirsty
 1. Only the thirsty can taste of the Living Water
- v. He was not convicted.
 1. Only sinners can be forgiven.
- vi. The greatest enemy of that that is Best is not that that is Bad, but that that is simply Good.

III. FOUR WHO DID UNDERSTAND THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

a. The Holy: Mary, The Mother of Jesus: LUKE 1:29-38

i. Her Confusion

1. *But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Luke 1:29 (NKJV)*
2. You don't have to understand the Gospel to accept the Gospel

ii. Her Curiosity

1. *Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" Luke 1:34 (NKJV)*
2. She had questions
3. Faith is not the absence of doubt but the willingness to obey God in the face of doubt and questions.

iii. Her Confession

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1. 38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38 (NKJV)
2. She yielded herself to God's authority
3. She agreed with God's Word
4. Here she showed not her great understanding of God's plan, but her great faith in God.

b. **The Humble: The Shepherds** LUKE 2:8

i. **Common Men**

1. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Luke 2:8 (NKJV)
2. God often calls the common man to do uncommon deeds
 - a. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 1 Cor 1:26-29 (NKJV)

ii. **Committed Men**

1. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night Luke 2:8 (NKJV)
2. They were doing their job, The first step back to God is to be faithful in the knowledge He has already given you. Don't focus on what you don't know, focus on what you do know, what you can't do, can do. Do what you know to do, Do what you can do.
3. Example from The Parable of the Talents:
 - a. 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away Matt 25:29 (NKJV)

iii. **Careful Men**

1. So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they came with haste and found

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Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Luke 2:15-16 (NKJV)

2. They acted on the message the angels brought them.

iv. Caring Men

1. *17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. Luke 2:17-18 (NKJV)*
2. They wanted everybody to know. They wanted to share the good news with others. Our faith is not a treasure to be hidden away, but a gift to be shared with others.

c. The Helpful: The Wise Men; MATT. 2:1

i. Great Men

1. *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, Matt 2:1 (NKJV)*
2. Possibly men from Persia, whose knowledge of the coming Messiah could be traced back to the Jewish captivity in Persia during Daniel's day.
3. Magi, Not ordinary men. Educated, Men of thought, intellectual, Gospel is for everyone.
4. God called Paul a highly educated man, but he also called Peter, a common fisherman.
5. Not Jews, God called them from afar off.

ii. Generous Men

1. *11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matt 2:11 (NKJV)*
2. Brought gifts to the Lord. When you meet Jesus you will give of your best to the Master in everything. “Our Best”

iii. God Fearing Men

1. *Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Matt 2:12 (NKJV)*
2. When you meet Jesus, you will be changed forever.

d. The Hurting: Thief on the Cross (Luke 23:41-42)

i. Hopeless

1. No opportunity for a 2nd chance

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- ii. Hurting
 - 1. In great physical pain, dying on a cross
- iii. Guilty
 - 1. Was a robber and and a thief.
 - 2.

IV. CONCLUSION

- a. Do you understand the True Meaning of Christmas? You can I can choose to be
 - i. Selfish like Herod
 - ii. Self-Righteous like the Pharisees
 - iii. Self-Satisfied like the Inn Keeper
 - iv. And we will never understand what Christmas is all about it.
- b. Or we can be:
 - i. Holy like Mary
 - ii. Humble like the Shepherds
 - iii. Helpful like the Wise Men
 - iv. Or we may even be Hurting like the Thief on the cross
 - v. And if we turn our eyes to the One who came to Save us from our sin and to Bring our Creator to us, then we will truly understand the True Meaning of Christmas.