

The Glory of the Christmas Story and Its Personal Reception

 2020scripturalvision.com/post/the-glory-of-the-christmas-story-and-its-personal-reception

December 25, 2024



Christmas stirs up strong passions in many people. Was Christ really born on December 25th? Is Christmas a pagan holiday? Should professing believers be celebrating Christmas? These are commonly debated subjects, and so they should be. That Christmas is a pagan festival is very plausible, a controversy I was unaware till in my adult years (I also had never heard of anything against Christmas or that Christmas was bad). The time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is celebrated, seem to prove its origin. But that is not the end of the argument. Many do not agree with this assessment. [This article argues that it was not a pagan festival](#), as does this one: [Refuting the “Christmas is Pagan” Myth](#). Maybe they’re right. Here is what the [Encyclopaedia Britannica says on Christmas](#).

Here is a brief summary of the history of Christmas and our position when it comes to celebrating the holiday. 1) We avoid any pagan aspects that are associated with it. 2) We have nothing to do with secular elements attached to it, such as Santa Claus (whom our children know as Satan Claus), Rudolph, Frosty and the like. 3) We don’t worship the sun

or set up idols or participate in sacraments or pray to saints. 4) We aren't sure whether Jesus was born on Dec 25th, but there is no issue with celebrating Christ's birth on this day or another day. The following interesting linked article examines whether Jesus was really born on Dec 25, as does this one. 5) Jer 10:2-4 is not referring to Christmas trees. Not even by a stretch. Taking a passage of Scripture (and others such as Is 44:14-15 and Jer 3:13) and bending, twisting and forcing them into what you want them to say is not Biblical exegesis but wresting of Scripture which is an error of the wicked (2 Pet 3:16-17). 6) There is little to no history of Christmas celebration until medieval times. 7) Christmas appears to have originated with Roman Catholicism, though the above linked articles may refute this. The pope apparently invented it to compete with the revelry of pagan festivals revolving around Winter solstice. 8) When Christmas was first introduced, many actual Christians were against Christmas. Protestants post-Reformation (they could now take charge), did away with it. The pilgrims of the Plymouth colony did not observe Christmas. 9) Christmas has become a western tradition and has grown substantially in popularity influenced by secular notions like Santa Claus, sort of coming full circle to the revelry again. 10) Christmas is the only traditional observance of the birth of or the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and many churches see Christmas as a time to exalt the coming of Jesus to the earth as the most important event in world history. 11) We don't believe it is wrong to give special recognition to Christ's birth and to use Christmas as a tool for evangelism. Most people even in North America do not know the true gospel, and Christmas can be a good occasion for explaining who Jesus Christ is and why He came into the world. Many people will go to church at Christmas time who never darken the doors other times of the year, including people of pagan religions, since there is less stigma about mingling with Christians on such occasions. 12) We also don't believe its wrong to enjoy some aspects of the Christmas season: singing Christmas carols (as long as they are Scriptural, though many aren't — soon to be published report on *Hymns and Christmas Carols that Sing Contrary to God's Word*), enjoying sound Biblically accurate Hymns, enjoying the social blessings of the holiday. When you regulate your worship by scripture, you can preach and sing about the birth of Christ. 13) "Christmas" is a word with an etymology. Maybe some think "Christmas" is mass in its apostate form but the RCC twist a lot of things, like a lot of other religions do. You can't take every word and break it down into its etymology. Christmas doesn't mean "Catholic mass." "Christmas" means the celebration of Christ's birth.

I'm not convinced that using the term Christmas is a wrong practice. One of the big problems, it seems, is the "mas" part at the end of "Christmas." Is using the term "Christmas" supporting the Roman Catholic mass? Is using the term Easter supporting the worship of Ishtar? I don't believe it is. I do not believe that Christmas means Mithraism, Winter solstice, or is a Roman Catholic holiday. I also do not believe it is syncretism, blending a practice from paganism into the stream of Christianity.

I understand some people take a hard stance against Christmas. I don't like being an offence to these people, but I'm not convinced that we can't take this traditional time of celebrating the incarnation of Christ and use it to extol the birth of Christ. For me, maybe the biggest concern is not Christmas itself, but the secularization and commercialization of it. The covetousness that is displayed, promoted, and fed, even in our own circles and families presents a dilemma. How can someone say they are focused on the birth of the Messiah while engaging with (or come dangerously close to flirting with) in what the Scriptures call idolatry? Satanic powers, it seems, are hard at work attempting to take Christ out of Christmas, hence its replacement with "Happy Holidays," whatever the "Holi" means. Politicians apparently can only ever mention Christ when they speak the word "Christmas." Some have argued that "X-mas" was a conspiracy, not knowing that the X is the first letter of "Christ" in the Greek alphabet, so it means "Christ." It has never occurred to me that Christ wasn't in this season to begin with and that His being put into this season was a development.

I feel as if I'm in a juxtaposition concerning Christmas. I've got to defend Christmas and I've got to fight Christmas. both at the same time. It seems like both of these actions, the defending and the fighting, place a lot of emphasis on Christmas. Both of them are very serious about Christmas. The secularists are very serious about keeping Jesus out and the pious are very serious about keeping Jesus out. If I reject Christmas and keep Jesus out, I'll please both of them, the former for their love of my tolerance and the latter for my anti-paganism and Roman Catholicism. On the other side, I'll displease all the people who see both positions as extreme. Is it really that serious an issue? My personal take is that secularization or commercialization is easily the biggest problem here.

Liberty in Celebration of Days

The Apostle Paul writes in Rom. 14:5-6,

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."

These two verses relate to something Paul said previously in the same chapter, v. 1:

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

Certain issues are doubtful. Scripture doesn't say they are wrong and doesn't say they are right. Scripture is silent. Perhaps scriptural principles apply, but it is doubtful. Nothing is plain enough to make a clear application. Rom. 14:5-6 talk about the celebration of days being one of these issues of doubtful disputation. Christmas is a celebration of days, esteeming a particular day above another. The purpose is to celebrate Christ's birth, when we don't know what the day is that Jesus was born. The bigger principle according to scripture is not having division in the local church (the only type of church, there is no such thing as a "universal church") over something that is a non-scriptural issue. It's permissible to celebrate Christ's birth. We don't know what the day is, but it's even a good thing to celebrate it. Jesus' birth is a definite teaching of scripture. It is something to be thankful for and to praise God for. The shepherds in the fields that night did. They became the first evangelists recorded in the NT. Wise men from the east came to celebrate Him, to worship Him and bring Him gifts. Mary herself does this in Lk. 1:46-55 in scripture, referred to as Mary's Magnificat. We would be following a scriptural example. It's not just that, but the doctrine of the incarnation of God, that fulfills prophecy and brings salvation to mankind.

That is all we will say for now about this subject on the controversies of Christmas in this article. That doesn't mean we won't write about it in the future, we may, or that we are not open to comments or challenges about it, but for now it is beyond the scope of this report.

The Glory of the Christmas Story is in the Father Giving His Only Begotten Son

The glory is found in that God gave Himself for mankind, for the redemption of sinful man, to save humanity from perishing in the eternal lake of fire:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (Jn 3:16)

Jesus is Saviour, Lord and King, to the glory of the Father. His Revelation to mankind started at His birth.

The true King of Heaven and earth was born under very humble circumstances. While the king of Rome sat in his exceedingly rich palace surrounded by servants, his Creator and the true King of the world was born in a stable, in a manger where animals feed, in the most humble of environments. True power is not in self exaltation and earthly riches, though many live like that (and receive powerful or influential positions because of it, even in the church) but in self denial and humility, even as true conversion implores: he who

loses his life shall save it, he who is abased shall be exalted (Matt 16:24-25; Mk 8:34-35; Lk 9:23-24; Jn 12:24-25). God works through the weak and foolish, not the wise and (earthly) exalted.

At the very moment of His birth, roughly 4 B.C., the Lord Jesus Christ had more enemies than you could possibly imagine. Satanic forces were very busy at work, as they had been over the centuries, including behind many of the kings, such as Babylon, Medo, Persia, Greece, and Rome. King Herod in the most brutal manner attempted to stamp out and extinguish the glorious child King, resulting in Jesus and His parents exiling to Egypt.

When the Christ was born, an angel appeared to shepherds in the field giving them the heavenly message of the birth of the Son of man, followed by a heavenly host of angels, which is an army of angels, the word for “hosts,” praising God for His amazing gift to mankind:

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Lk 2:10-14)

The purpose of Jesus Christ was to seek and save that which is lost, even as His name declares, which means a divine sojourn from the cradle to the cross:

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb 2:9-10)

Christmas time is considered universally as a time of giving, and the concept of *“it is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Ac 20:35) is generally understood, though many would not relate it to Scripture. The theme of giving is very prominent in the Bible, with such words as “give,” “gift,” “gave,” etc., occurring more than 2,100x. The first is Gen 1:16-17 when God created the sun, moon, and stars *“to give light upon the earth,”* and the last is Rev 22:12 when Christ will return with His rewards to *“give every man according as his work shall be.”* The God of gifts, giving and blessing *“gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons,”* as well as *“life, and breath, and all things”* (Ac 14:17; 17:25).

But the greatest gift of all, without contest, was when God gave Himself for a wicked and undeserving world. It was the greatest gift because it met the greatest need, revealed the greatest love, and had the greatest scope and purpose of any gift that could ever be conceived in the heart of an omniscient Creator.

That however was not the end of His giving. *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Rom 8:32). Therefore, *“Trust . . . in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy”* (1 Tim 6:12). 2 Pet 1:3-4,

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

— THE — UNSPEAKABLE — GIFT —



2 CORINTHIANS 9:15

"Thanks be unto God for his
unspeakable gift."

The Gift of God is Not Received by Asking for the Gift

This great gift of God is abundantly sufficient to provide salvation and eternal life for the whole world. But a gift only becomes a gift when it is accepted and received, and the greatest of all tragedies is that this greatest of all gifts has been spurned and even ridiculed, or—worst of all—simply ignored by multitudes who need it so much. When they brazenly refuse God's free gift of everlasting life, which is done on the back of refusing to repent (Jn 3:19-21), they can only perish in everlasting death. God did all He could do when He gave His Son; for when He gave His Son, He gave Himself.

One element of today's false and anemic gospel of easy believism and quick prayerism is to receive "the gift of God" which is "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23) by simply asking for the free gift. But Rom 6:23 doesn't say that; it must be read into the verse, and all other passages proof-texted, for that matter. Scripture must be rightly divided (2 Tim 2:15) and not privately interpreted (2 Pet 1:20). Rom 6:23 does tell us about the wonderful gift of salvation but not how to acquire it. Salvation is only received by repentant faith in Jesus Christ.

Out of this error proceeds praying a scripted prayer to trust Jesus as your Saviour. This instruction follows from something that wasn't in the verse in the first place. The first step isn't biblical and then none that follow. The one teaching this is not starting with the Bible but following his own ideas or what someone has taught him.

You can't turn salvation into asking for the gift. This is not salvation, but it is a common turn from Rom 6:23 that many take. I think I get it. They want to simplify the plan to the extent that they get professions, that is, they get results. People want a gift. The idea is that a gift is very appealing to someone, so this offer brings more often a positive response. Since we know God is good, He wants to give you a gift. How could someone refuse a gift from God?! And the gift of all gifts, the gift of eternal life! Who wouldn't want eternal life? Come on! Just ask for it and take the gift! How can you refuse the greatest gift ever when God wants to give it to you? This emotional appeal moulds well into easy believism and quick prayerism.

I'm pretty sure the statistics on prayers prayed go exponentially upward with this approach. Who would reject a free gift? About no one. Rom 6:23 is used because it seems to sit there on a proverbial platter for using it in that way. Someone doesn't have to receive his wages for sin, instead he could just take this gift of eternal life. This simplifies salvation and provides the lure for asking for the gift, which is praying the prayer. The whole process of which I speak is very horrible. Though horrible is bad, very horrible is worse. I can't use enough "very's" in front of horrible. The end result is high plausibility of making the unsaved inoculated to the truth and then the two-fold children of hell.

Rom 6:23 tells us that death is the payment or wages of sin. The servant of sin has earned through his works, his evil deeds, his sinful ways, the wages of sin, which is death. He was paid for what he deserved. The servant of righteousness, the servant of "*Jesus Christ our Lord*," who has Jesus as His Master ("Lord"), doesn't earn eternal life.

He receives it by grace through repentant faith, so it is a gift of God. Death is a wage of sin, while "eternal life" (v. 23 – synonymous to "everlasting life") is a gift of God. The former is earned and the latter is received.

Upon repentant faith in Christ (Ac 20:21; Mk 1:15), God sets a man free from his slavery to sin (Jn 8:31-36; Rom 6:1-23), the end of which is eternal life. He doesn't serve sin anymore, which is why he has eternal life. Servants of sin die and servants of righteousness live. Passages such as Rom 6:23 in their context cannot be separated from repentance, habitual righteousness, the fruit of holiness, and Jesus Christ our Lord. If someone is a servant of sin, he doesn't have the gift of eternal life but is under the wages of sin. The end of the fruit of holiness is everlasting life.

The Glory of the Christmas Story Is Only Glory to Those Who Have Personally Received It

When you see distractions from the Incarnation message at Christmas, know that Satan, the prince of this world, commandeers his demonic fiends to conceal the saving gospel. Jesus will soon rule all nations with a rod of iron (Rev 12:5) but Lucifer would relegate the Lord to whimsy and decoration, blended with Santa, elves, Scrooge, Rudolph, Frosty, the Grinch, snowflakes, and sleigh rides. With gladness Satan obstructs most of the good news a lost world needs in the festive and bright packaging of holiday cheer. Even churches cooperate with the garish productions they use to lure a crowd year after year in the month of December. In his own way and for all intents and purposes, to most men the prince of darkness does devour the Christ Child (Rev 12). As it relates to Satan's strategy, it is very merry Christmas indeed.

As to another very Merry Christmas, the saving gospel proclaims the instant one repents and believes, all of his past, present, and future sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb, and he receives the imputed righteousness of Christ as his legal standing before God. You go through the metamorphosis of the sinner, where God makes you a saint, a brand new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17; 1 Cor 6:11). Because the Lord Jesus paid for his sins in full when He died as his Substitute, God treats every believer as if he were as sinless and righteous as His own Son. The penalty of the Law entirely satisfied, both God's justice and mercy demand the eternal salvation of the justified individual. God is *"just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"* (Rom. 3:26), so we conclude, with the Apostle Paul, that *"a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law"* (Rom. 3:28).

Anyone who believes that deeds, such as manufactured pious humility, “trying your best,” baptism, regular church attendance, partaking of the Lord’s supper, pursuing obedience to the Bible, daily prayer, confession of sin, conforming to the law of God, keeping the Lord’s day, or doing “good” by helping out people in the community, and “trying your best” reforming or overcoming an addiction through repetitive chants or actions, or any other act has a particle to do with receiving justification before God does not believe in Jesus Christ at all; he merely has intellectual understanding of the facts of the gospel, a kind of “faith” that he shares with the devils (Jam. 2:19) and the damned. Rather,

“*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*” (Rom 4:5)

Will you dear sinner repent and believe for the salvation of your soul and receive eternal life, or will you resist and deny the conviction and reproof of God the Spirit on your heart that is “*deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*” (Jer. 17:9)?

Jeremiah’s lament is my lament:

“*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and [many, very many] are not saved.*”
(Jer 8:20)

The churches today are loaded with people who embrace religious traditions from both sides of the pendulum swing, and have never personally and genuinely received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. They go happily along their way into an eternal damnation, too proud and arrogant to repent and reject the heresies and false teachings they have embraced all their life. As time rolls on, it only becomes worse for them and more difficult to repent, God no longer drawing and convicting them (Pr 1:20-32).

Friend, you do not have innumerable opportunity to be saved. God eventually stops working in the lives of those He draws, reproves, convicts and grants repentance, when they heed not His call. Many are called, few are chosen, because few choose to repent (Matt 22:1-14). They will not repent because,

“*[They] loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*” (Jn 3:19-21)

Have you bought into this lie of asking for the gift or other elements of easy believism or quick prayerism? Have you prayed to receive the gift, as is frequently taught today (such as by pastor Michael Sullivant and PVBC)?

The Lord Jesus Christ declared,

"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life [wants to live his own way and will not turn to God's way] shall lose it [in hell]; but whosoever shall lose his life [deny self and surrender to Jesus Christ] for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it [receive life, and eternal life]. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? [in hell] Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mk 8:34-37)

God is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance (2 Pet 3:9). The problem is sin, and sinful man's refusal to repent. Is 59:1-2,

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

The light shines into the darkness, and thus the most critical question to be pondered in the sinners heart is this: will you respond to the light? The time to be saved is when God is drawing you, convicting you, and reproving you. Such as this very moment. The Love-Gift Offering of God warns "*repent [or] perish*," (Lk 13:1-5) and the reading of our gospel tract will help you in this endeavour towards true repentance, which can bring true salvation to your spirit, soul and body: **ARE YOU SAVED?** Please read it.