

THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a time for families and friends, for presents and parties, for eating and drinking. It is (for most of us) a wonderful time of the year. However, amid the tinsel and festivities many of us many have vague feeling of dread and emptiness and privately believe, “is Christmas really just about enjoyment of our desires? Is there nothing more?” Especially this year, in the last few months, we have realized that prosperity may not last forever. The world is in the grips of a severe financial and economic downturn; some of us many loose our homes, our jobs, our savings, and all of us will fear that the future in 2009 may not be as rosy as the past.

Perhaps, then it is time to revisit the question of what Christmas means. The Bible tells us that the true meaning of Christmas is that God, the Almighty and majestic creator and ruler of the universe took on human flesh and became a mere baby in the man Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, why would the eternal uncreated unique God become a human being? The apostle Paul, one of Jesus’ followers, says this in the Bible: “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (1 Timothy 1:15).

What Paul means is that Jesus, God himself came to earth as a human for a purpose – in order to rescue human beings who are “sinners.” In the Bible to be a “sinner” does not merely mean doing wrong things, it essentially means have a corrupt and wicked nature and character: of being a rebel in the hands of an angry God. All of us without exception have rejected God and become cosmic traitors and terrorists against the true ruler of the universe. The verdict against us from God is the punishment of everlasting punishment in hell. That is the grim and stark *bad news* at Christmas time.

Nevertheless, God, in his merciful love, has done something about our evil natures and his anger against us. He, in the flesh of Jesus Christ, has paid the punishment for believers' rebellion and evil by dying on the cross taking the place of believers so that those who trust in Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour are forgiven. That is the *good news* of Christmas and Paul stresses that the good news is based on truth (it corresponds to historical and spiritual reality) and should be received by all: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance."

Therefore, the best Christmas present of all is Jesus Christ and our rescue from our evil and the wrath of God. Christmas is about crib and cross together. We cannot have the crib without the cross. The Nativity and Good Friday are related. In addition, like other Christmas gifts, the good news of Christmas needs to be received and accepted. We accept God's gift through faith. That is, we must believe that Jesus is the unique God we have offended, say sorry for our rebellion and trust Jesus for our rescue. Make Jesus the Master and Saviour of your life this Christmas. I pray that you will all this Christmas discover the true meaning of Christmas.

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