

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL 2011

Part 1

There is so much to think about at Christmas. No, I am not talking about the lights, the hot cider, cookies, music, gifts, family, and the bubbly. I am thinking of the grand incarnation. In the midst of the joyous holiday cheer let us not lose sight of the profundity of the incarnation. To help us stay focused on the Reason for the season, I have decided to do a Christmas special that will run through Sunday. This special will include daily doctrines on Christmas as well as a Christmas special Wednesday and then Christmas morning at 11:00 a.m.

The first principle I want to introduce is the importance of not judging others with respect to their celebration or lack thereof of Christmas. I take my cue from:

Colossians 2:16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day

Romans 14:5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.

To be sure, there is a lot of superficiality around Christmas. Most people are in the dark regarding the incarnation, the hypostatic union, and how Jesus came into the world to die for the sins of mankind. With all of that said, let us be careful not to look down and judge others on how they celebrate or do not celebrate Christmas. To be sure, Christmas was not celebrated in the New Testament, and no mandate was given for its celebration for the church. However, there is no prohibition either. Note how Paul in the Roman's passage above gives great latitude to Christian practices regarding observance of special days. He does not even say who is right. While we do not know the exact day Christ was born, December 25th is as good as any day to take time to think about God becoming a man—wow, that is a heavy thought! One is free to celebrate Christmas or not celebrate Christmas. I would add that Christmas *does* provide us with the opportunity to think about how God entered our world in a real way to redeem us. It takes a measure of maturity not to be censorious in the face of superficiality of those engulfed in kosmos diabolicus. Instead of running everyone down for the commercialization of the incarnation, we can take the time to orient to and advance in our understanding in this event. The main point is that no matter what we do with regard to Christmas, it must be as unto the Lord:

Romans 14:6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

The second principle I would like to introduce is that Christmas is a time to remember that God is in control of history (history really is all about His story):

Luke 2:1-6 Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ² This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵ in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶ And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.

God's *decree* was the decree behind Caesar's *decree*. God is in absolute control. He was the one who prompted Caesar to give a census for tax purposes. God is working this whole thing out to bring Grace into the world. Consider the personal discomfort Mary and Joseph would have experienced in this trip. Here is a young couple, the wife was pregnant, and they needed to make this trip by mule. This was all part of God's actions to fulfill the Scriptures to get Mary to Bethlehem where the eternal second person of the Trinity would enter the body of the child and forever unite Himself with it. Did you know that the Eternal Son of God actually spoke to God the Father *the Night before Christmas*?

Hebrews 10:5-9 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, But a body Thou hast prepared for Me; ⁶ In whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin Thou hast taken no pleasure. ⁷ "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the roll of the book it is written of Me) To do Thy will, O God.'" ⁸ After saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast Thou taken pleasure *in them*" (which are offered according to the Law), ⁹ then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Thy will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second.

Merry CHRISTmas!

Pastor Don