

## Have A Meaningful Christmas!

### Rod Taylor

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This time of year, we often hear folks saying the Jesus is “the Reason for the Season.” And that’s true. We celebrate the birth of the Christ-child at Christmas time because our ancestors—physical and spiritual—have chosen to connect his birth with this time of year. Over the centuries, much of the civilized world has developed pleasant traditions around Christmas, which—although they have no strong connection to biblical models—have now become a part of our culture. There’s no evidence that the Apostle Paul or the believers in Ephesus (for example) ever put up a Christmas tree, exchanged gifts or carved a turkey on December 25.

If anything, the early believers were much more focused on the death and resurrection of our Lord than on his birthday. However, there are valuable lessons for us in the biblical accounts of our Saviour’s birth: the angelic revelations to Joseph and Mary and to the shepherds, the miraculous virgin birth, the star, the wise men bringing their gifts from afar, the lowly stable and Herod’s jealous and murderous rage. All of these and more—pre-born John the Baptist leaping in his mother’s womb and the fulfillment of ancient prophecies—underscore the importance and significance of Christ’s coming into the world in human flesh to “save His people from their sins.”

What about our traditions—the tree, the turkey, the family celebrations? We know that some have questioned them as hand-me-down pagan cultural artifacts and others are “all in,” making the most of the occasion. Whatever your thoughts about the historicity of the traditions or the exact date when Christ was born, we can all agree that it’s good to remember that God sent Jesus to be our salvation and our righteous King. We don’t worship a tree or a turkey. We worship Christ alone.

And what kind of a King is He? Isaiah describes Him as a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” In Hebrews 1, we are told that He was “anointed with the oil of joy, surpassing that of His companions.” In short, He experienced all the range of emotions that we humans feel. We are told that “for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross.” Jesus gave Himself, in all things, to the will of the Father. Before His crucifixion, He said, “Not my will but Thine be done.”

Doing the will of God, He found joy unspeakable and full of glory. Modern philosophers simplify this by saying, “short-term pain for long-term gain.” We also can find joy—true and everlasting joy—by following in His footsteps and choosing the will of God over our own personal inclinations. Those choices are not always painless. Often they involve sacrifices of time, money, comfort or even a loss of worldly reputation. But as we yield ourselves to His plans and purposes, we can experience deep satisfaction and the joy of the Lord.

The phrase “Merry Christmas!” is a good and positive greeting and certainly—to the extent it is rooted in true faith—much deeper than the secular “Season’s Greetings” that has become the politically-correct exchange of recent years. I often greet people during this season with a “Merry Christmas!” But I also recognize the sad reality that on any given day, not everyone can be merry, bubbly, cheerful and happy.

There are those who have recently lost a loved one or a home or a job. There are some who have just been diagnosed with a dread disease and others who may be dealing with a broken relationship. Today, our world is consumed with the news of “wars and rumours of wars.” Over a half million have died in Ukraine and thousands in the Middle East. Not every person can be merry at this time . . . but every blood-bought son and daughter of the Most High God can have a meaningful time of reflection on the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. And every one can have the joy of knowing the Son of God.

On behalf of my family and the CHP National Board, I wish every one of you a deeply meaningful Christmas and a cup running over with the joy of the Lord. Enjoy the time you have with your friends and families. Pray for our nation of Canada that we might once again become a nation “whose God is the Lord.”

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