

Keep Christ in Christmas

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In one of the classic Dr. Seuss Christmas films, “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas,” there comes a time of reckoning for the Grinch. He reflects on the meaning of Christmas when he states: “Maybe Christmas doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.” Well, the Grinch was right. And the Bible tells us why Christmas was very important to the human race.

There is a reason why the name “Christ” appears in the word Christmas! It’s because Christmas is all about Jesus Christ. Christianity is Christ. In the same way, Christmas is Christ. It’s amazing how our society has jettisoned the true meaning of Christmas. They have replaced Christ with Christmas trees, presents, helping others, family get togethers, Frosty the Snowman, etc. Of course, none of these things are wrong in and of themselves. I had to watch “Frosty the Snowman” and “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” with my grandchildren this year. But here is the point, if we leave Christ out of Christmas, we have lost the true meaning and reason for Christmas.

We must always keep Christ in Christmas. This is because Christmas gives us a four-fold revelation about Christ.

1. There is the GLORY when Jesus came (His birth)

Luke 2:8-9

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid (*terrified*). And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings (news) of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

The revelation or appearance of this angelic being was to result in the announcement Christmas – the birth of Jesus Christ! But accompanying the angelic message was the radiant, shining, glory of God’s eternal being and existence. There was a heavenly brightness which flashed all around them, reflecting the God’s presence and power, His majesty and splendor.

Ivor Powell explained it like this:

“Probably in those early hours of this never to be forgotten morning, no other men were awake. The city would be silent, and very few, if any, travelers would be on the roads at such an hour. Out in the fields, sitting together near their flocks, these men sat and talked. Then suddenly the lights came on!”

When the Bible states, “the glory of the Lord shone round about them” it means the shepherds were enveloped in the glorious display of light. What was this radiant light that the shepherds witnessed when Jesus was born? This “glory” was no doubt a radiant display of God’s Shekinah glory of the Old Testament revelation that indicated God’s holy and majestic presence. These shepherds were in one sense bathed in the Shekinah glory, the light of another world, the light that revealed the divine presence of God at the same time the message was heralded about Christ’s birth.

Suddenly, the field was ablaze with the radiance of God’s glorious and majestic light which was a reflection of His holiness and perfections. Luke describes the light as "the glory of the Lord" because it was a direct reflection of His holy and righteous character.

The glory cloud indicates that when Christ was born that God had entered the world. The glory of God was related to the newborn Son of God for He was part of the eternal existence of God. This was not the first time God's glory cloud appeared on earth.

Exodus 24:16

“And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.”

1 Kings 8:10

“And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy *place*, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD.”

Throughout Scripture, God's glorious presence was manifested in brilliant light. The light at the birth announcement signified that God's presence had entered the world through the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Light speaks of revelation. On that night long ago, God was sending a clear message about the birth of Jesus Christ His Son.

➤ **First, the newborn Son shared God's glory (deity).**

God's glorious presence and nature revealed in this display of radiant light was confirming His approval of the birth of His Son who shared God's own existence with the Father. According to Hebrews 1:3, Christ: “Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The radiant light of glory was intended to be a reflection of Christ's own glory (deity) as the eternal God who in a humble fashion had just been born in a stable on the backside of Bethlehem.

Many people enjoy putting Christmas lights on their trees, bushes, and homes at this time of the year. In the dark of night, they emanate beautiful colors of light. What an awesome and yet frightening sight this glory light must have been for the shepherds to behold!

“While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
An angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.”

This was the ultimate Christmas light! God’s glorious light that gave the approval of His Son’s birth and demonstrated the Son’s link to the Eternal Godhead.

➤ **Second, the newborn Son was the light of the world.**

In one sense, when Jesus came into the world the lights came on! This is because God’s Son was born, and a new day had dawned. Jesus was born and when He came into the world, He was the light of the world not only revealing God’s presence but also His plan of salvation to mankind. The light at the time of Christ’s birth was a demonstration of this.

Luke 1:78-79 declares this about Christ:

Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and [in] the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

John 8:12

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

You see, light means revelation. Jesus came to reveal God to mankind and salvation to those who were in darkness of sin and unbelief. What people need today is light – the light of God’s revelation concerning His Son who came into the world to die for sinners and grant the forgiveness, salvation from hell, and eternal life.

It started in November with a single string of Christmas lights on a Baltimore County street. Kim Morton was home watching TV with her daughter when she received a text from her neighbor who lives directly across the road. He told her to peek outside.

Matt Riggs had hung a string of white Christmas lights, stretching from his home to hers. He also left a tin of homemade cookies on her doorstep. The lights, he told her, were meant to reinforce the fact that they were always friends and wanted to stay connected. Riggs said, "I was reaching out to Kim to literally brighten her world."

This is what Jesus did when He entered the world. He came to brighten our world by bringing us the light of salvation and eternal life through His death and resurrection. So, the glory of the Lord was a revelation of God's personal existence, and it sent a very clear message that God's saving revelation had come to mankind through His Son Jesus Christ.

2. There is the GODHEAD that Jesus portrayed (His Person)

This flows out of our first point but becomes more specific regarding the person of Jesus Christ. If Jesus is not God – there is no Christmas!

Matthew 1:23 declares:

"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."

Jesus was 100 percent God of very God! He was deity. Jesus is Jehovah incarnate. Regarding the person of Jesus Christ – He was God with us! This is because Jesus is the second Person within the Godhead. Jesus exists within the Trinity (three Persons) of the Godhead.

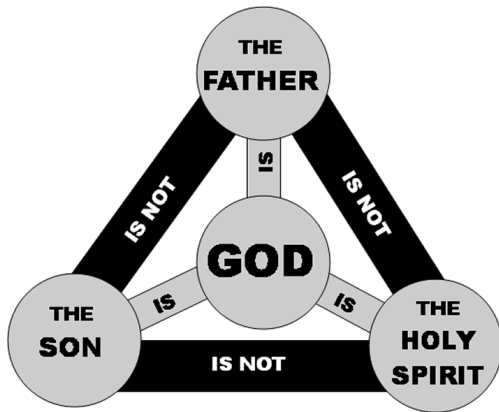
1 John 5:7

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

This means Jesus was a revelation of the Godhead (God the Son) when He was born into the world. Jesus as the Son of God was and always will be – God with us! I keep telling the Jehovah Witnesses this who come to my door. It tell them that only God can save a person from hell and everlasting damnation; therefore, Jesus must be Jehovah (Yahweh) since only Jehovah can save us!

John 1:18 declares:

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father (*possessing a special nearness and a very close and intimate relationship with the Father*), he hath declared him” (*exegeted God to mankind*).



Theologically, we know that both Jesus (God the Son) and the Father (God the Father) are different persons, but they share the same existence together as God within the oneness of the Godhead. In short, Jesus was born to reveal God to mankind. When Jesus came into the world God was literally with us! He was Immanuel which was prophesied thousands of years before the birth of Christ.

Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

When I saw the Grand Canyon for the very first time, I was stunned at the beauty of this place. Pictures cannot describe or do justice to it. You must see it to get a grasp on its vastness and beauty. The Grand Canyon, like the sky, sun, moon and all of creation does not reveal everything to us about God. It does reveal He exists and that He is a God of infinite power (Rom. 1:20). This is called *general* revelation. But Jesus had to come to reveal God’s love, grace mercy, and salvation to mankind in a direct and life-giving manner. This is called *special* creation.

Matthew 1:23 again states:

“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.”

Please note that Jesus had to be born of the virgin Mary in order to be Immanuel. Without the virgin birth (protecting Christ’s deity and sinless nature) there would be no Immanuel. Jesus Christ was God with a body! He took on the form of a man so He could reveal God to man. If you take the virgin birth away from Christmas, you have no Christmas. And if you strip Christ’s of His deity, you have no more Christmas! What you have left is an empty shell with no substance.

Not long ago I was at Dairy Queen. I was eating my blizzard and was minding my own business when suddenly something happened. I had eaten my last bite of blizzard. And what did I do after this? I turned to my wife and asked if she was going to finish the rest of hers. Let me tell you something – a blizzard is good but an empty cup without any blizzard or ice cream is worthless.

The same is true if we take Christ out of Christmas and even more so, remove the deity of Jesus Christ (Emmanuel – God with us). Christmas is empty and meaningless without the revelation of Emmanuel. Only God can save us. Let us never forget this. Jesus revealed God to mankind and in doing this He could bridge the gap between God and man.

1 Timothy 2:5

For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

3. There is the GRACE that Jesus displayed (His Work)

What was the purpose of Christ’s birth and entrance into the world? It was to provide salvation for mankind which was an expression of God’s grace or kindness reaching out to a lost world.



Matthew 1:21 says this about Christ’s birth: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

This is talking about Jesus saving us from the penalty or judgment that our sins bring upon us which is the expression of God’s wrath and judgment being meted out upon us forever in hell.

Luke 2:10-11 shares the same truth regarding Christ’s birth:

“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.”

We need a Savior (the expression of God's grace) to save us for there is still a place called hell that Jesus came to save us from this place of punishment for sinners. This is not old-fashioned – it's Bible fashioned!

Jesus said in Luke 16:23:

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

Jesus also stated in Matthew 23:33:

“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”

You might say to me, “Now wait a minute preacher, this is not part of the Christmas message or story! It does not sound like Christmas. You need to talk about peace, hope, and joy – not hell.” But hell is the reason Jesus came into the world. He was born to be our Savior from hell and damnation. By the way, this is what gives us true peace, hope, and joy!

Luke 2:11

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

Christ entered the world to display grace to all mankind – the grace of salvation which delivers us from hell. If you reject Christ and fail to express faith in Him to be your Savior, then you will be in hell one minute after you die. Your eyes will open in hell. You will find yourself in this dreadful place of suffering and woe.

Billy Sunday said

“You will not be in Hell five minutes until you believe there is one.”

Hell is a horrible place of suffering, fire, and memory for those who reject Christ as their Savior (John 3:36; Heb. 9:27). Hell is no joke even though today it's often used as a swear word and is made out to be a fairytale place that Dante invented. If Heaven is real, then hell is real. You might say, “I don't believe in hell.” That does not change the reality of hell. There is a hell. Jesus spoke more about hell than He did about Heaven.

D.L. Moody said

“The same Christ that tells us of Heaven with all its glories, tells us of Hell with all its horrors.”

Hell was why Jesus was born. He came to save us from hell. Let's not sugarcoat it. If you take hell out of the background of Christmas, you have lost the purpose and meaning of Christmas! The lights, the hope, the peace, the joy are all reflected in the person of Jesus Christ coming into the world to save sinners from hell. Why celebrate Christmas if there is no Savior and no hell!!

The Christmas hymn reminds us of how Christ came to rescue us from Satan's power which kept us under the realm of spiritual death and judgment (Eph. 2:1).

“God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas Day.
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray
Oh tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
Oh tidings of comfort and joy.”

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). This means Christ came to save us by His grace and grace alone!

Ephesians 2:8 -9 clearly reveals:

“For by grace are ye saved (*referring to Christ's sacrifice on the cross*) through faith (*placing faith in the saving and provisional sacrifice of Christ*); and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Grace (God's favor and kindness) was displayed in Christ's sacrifice for you. If you go to hell, you will do so rejecting the true meaning of Christmas which centers on Christ coming to die on the cross to be your Savior. Christ entered the world to grant each one of us who believe on His Son the blessed hope of salvation and eternal life. Jesus was born to save and change your life forever!

In the summer of 1861, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's wife, Frances, died tragically in a fire. That first Christmas without her, he wrote in his diary, “How

inexpressibly sad are the holidays.” The next year was no better, as he recorded, “‘A merry Christmas,’ say the children, but that is no more for me.”

In 1863, as the American Civil War was dragging on, Longfellow’s son joined the army against his father’s wishes and was critically injured. On Christmas Day that year, as church bells announced the arrival of another painful Christmas, Longfellow picked up his pen and began to write, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.”



The poem begins pleasantly, lyrically, but then takes a dark turn. The violent imagery of the pivotal fourth verse ill suits a Christmas carol. “Accursed” cannons “thundered,” mocking the message of peace.

By the fifth and sixth verses, Longfellow’s desolation is nearly complete. “It was as if an earthquake rent the hearth-stones of a continent,” he wrote. The poet nearly gave up: “And in despair I bowed my head; ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said.” But then, from the depths of that bleak Christmas day, Longfellow heard the irrepressible sound of hope. And he wrote this seventh stanza.

“Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: “God is not dead, nor doth He sleep! The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good-will to men!”

The war raged on and so did memories of his personal tragedies, but it could not stop Christmas. The Messiah is born! And Christ promises, “I will make everything new!” (Rev. 21:5). Thank God for this!

4. There is the GIFT that Jesus gave (His Life)

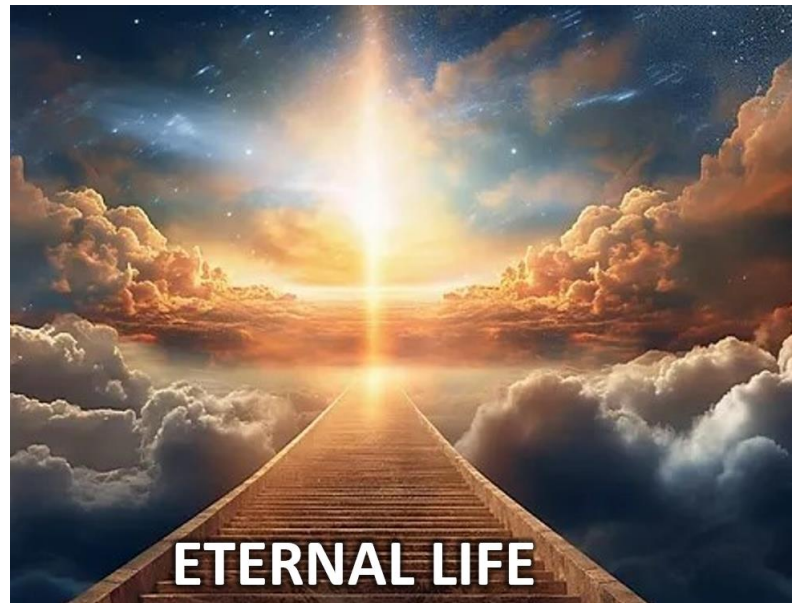
The transfer of Christ’s life to us means we receive eternal life which is an unending spiritual life with Him in Heaven.

1 John 5:11-12 gives this wonderful promise: “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

Romans 6:23 explains the need for the gift of eternal life:

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Christmas is a time of giving gifts. When we give gifts to our loved ones and friends, we do not include the receipt so they will reimburse us! Gifts are free. In fact, the nature of any gift is that it's free. I don't give my wife a gift on Christmas Day and say, “Honey, you can pay me back in an installment program.” No, gifts are always free and that is the case with the gift of eternal life that is offered to each one of us.



Here are two important points to ponder from Romans 6:23.

A. **The reason for God's gift** – “the wages of sin is death.”

As we have already seen, to die without the salvation of Jesus Christ results in separation from God in hell forever. A “wage” is something we have earned and deserve! Because we have sinned against God, we DESERVE what we get – hell!

B. **The reassurance of God's gift** – “but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

What great reassurance this is! The true purpose and reason of Christmas brings us hope! Eternal life comes to us “through Jesus Christ.” This means that when

Christ died on the cross, He paid the necessary fine to rescue us from God's wrath and judgment and then rose again the third day to give us eternal life. If we are going to ever receive eternal life it can only come through Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. Eternal life (which we possess today and will possess forever as we live with God in Heaven) is comparable to a free gift that we can receive right now – "the gift of God is eternal life."

I remember looking at some gifts that I wanted to give to my wife for Christmas. I picked one up and before I looked at the price the lady reminded me that I can get 15 percent off! After I looked at the price, I knew why she said this!

The nature of a gift is twofold.

➤ **It must be received.**

If someone offers you a gift you must receive it and take it. The gift of eternal is like this. It must be taken or received by faith. A person has not expressed belief or faith in Christ unless they are willing to take God's offer of salvation and eternal life.

Revelation 22:17 explains it like this:

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Eternal life is comparable to a refreshing drink that we can take and enjoy. Jesus died on the cross taking the punishment for your sin (Gal. 3:13) and He arose again the third day (1 Cor. 15:3) to give you eternal life with Him forever in Heaven. If you want it, you can take it, like a gift, and receive the gift that Jesus offers to you.

➤ **It must be free.**

Revelation 21:6 similarly states:

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

The free nature of the gift of salvation and eternal life cannot be overstated. Here is the point. Grace (God's favor and kindness expressed to sinners) is what the

Christmas season is all about. Christ came, He was born to die on the cross, and then rise again to give us the free gift of eternal life! Grace means that God gives to us eternal life freely and without price.

Isaiah 55:1 declares:

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.:

This is not the “Ho, Ho, Ho” of Santa Clause but an interjection that is designed to get our attention. The gift of eternal life is absolutely free! Receive it and live.

D.L. Moody said:

“Take it as you take the air into your lungs!”

Christ was born to be your Savior, and this can only come by receiving His free gift of eternal life. You can take this free gift today by expressing simple faith in Christ and what He did to give you eternal life. Believing on Christ is receiving Christ (John 1:12) which involves taking the provision of salvation and eternal life that He graciously provides for you.

Romans 10:13

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Calling on Christ, believing on Christ, receiving Christ, taking His offer of salvation and eternal life are all expressions of what it means to place simple faith in Christ. Have you ever expressed personal faith in Christ in order to receive His free gift of eternal life? If not, do it today! You don’t go to Heaven by DEFAULT but by a personal DECISION to trust Christ as your Savior.

This is why Jesus was born. He was born to give us eternal life. All the lights, giving, joy, peace, and hope associated with the Christmas season should be a reflection and display of what Jesus Christ has come to do for us. They should all point to Christ. After all, Christmas is Christ! Jesus was born to die for us and become our Savior from hell and give us everlasting life in Heaven.

Jesus promised in John 6:47:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

Transfer your trust or faith to Christ today to grant you the free gift of everlasting life.

I remember trying to walk through a dark room and tripping over one of the children’s Christmas toys and hitting my shin on the door. I said, “Will someone please turn on the lights!” Friend, we need to turn on the true lights during this time of the year and keep Christ in Christmas. As Christians, we need to turn on the lights and share the true meaning of Christmas with people. Jesus Christ was born to die and save sinners like you and me.

1 Timothy 1:15 declares:

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance (*reception, approval*), that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

This is keeping Christ in Christmas!



I read about a man who was not a scrooge, he was a kind decent, mostly good man from the human point of view. He was generous to his family, upright in his dealings with other men. But he just didn't believe all that incarnation stuff which the churches proclaim at Christmas Time. It just didn't make sense and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just couldn't swallow the Jesus Story, about God coming to Earth as a man.

"I'm truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, "but I'm not going with you to church this Christmas Eve." He said he'd feel like a hypocrite. That he'd much rather just stay at home, but that he would wait up for them. And so he stayed and they went to the midnight service.



"If only I could be a bird."

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound...Then another, and then another. Sort of a thump or a thud...At first, he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his

living room window. But when he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They'd been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window.

Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it.

Quickly he put on a coat, galoshes, tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them in. So he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs, sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail to the yellow-

lighted wide open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the breadcrumbs, and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them...He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms...Instead, they scattered in every direction, except into the warm, lighted barn.

And then, he realized that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me...That I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how? Because any move he made tended to frighten them, confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed because they feared him.

“If only I could be a bird,” he thought to himself, “and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe warm barn. But I would have to be one of them so they could see and hear and understand.”

At that moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas and the incarnation of Christ into humanity. And he sank to his knees in the snow and prayed the sinner’s prayer and was saved. Why? It’s because God had taught him a lesson through the birds. God must become like us to save us. And that is what God did when Jesus was born into the world. He became man (the Godman) so He might be one of us and save us!

