

Christmas 2013

Whose Christmas Is it Anyway?

The Conflicts of Christmas

A Sign of the Times

As a little girl climbed onto Santa's lap, Santa asked the usual, "And what would you like for Christmas?"

The child stared at him open mouthed and horrified for a minute, then gasped: "Didn't you get my E-mail?"

The Conflicts of Christmas

→ Contention

Who says Christmas belongs to you?

Whose is it anyway?

1. Washington (AP) – You better watch out. You better not cry. There is a new combatant in the Christmas wars:

Ads proclaiming, "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake," appeared on Washington buses during Christmas past.

The American Humanist Association unveiled the provocative \$40,000 holiday ad campaign for this reason:

"We are trying to reach our audience, and sometimes in order to reach an audience, everybody has to hear you," said Fred Edwords, spokesman for the humanist group.

"Our reason for doing it during the holidays is there are an awful lot of agnostics, atheists and other types of non-theists who feel a little alone during the holidays because of its association with traditional religion."

The British Humanist Association caused a ruckus announcing a similar campaign on London buses with the message: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."

2. In Melbourne (2007), when the churches were advocating “Put Christ back into Christmas” they responded “No, don’t, because Christmas belongs to everyone and not you alone!”

A USA atheist group's sign:

"At this season of the winter solstice, may reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."

The proverbial "elephant in the room"
(Cause for divisiveness)

Ignoring the key point – Christ came to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15) – the dark side

Now consider the imponderable?

“What If...”

→ “If I had not come ... (John 15:22)
What if He had not come to earth?

“What If...”

What if He had not been born in Bethlehem?

What if He had not walked the dusty roads of
Judea?

What if He had not uttered those wonderful
words we call the Sermon on the Mount?

What if He had not walked on water?

What if He had not made the blind see, the
deaf hear, the lame walk?

What if He had never raised the dead?

What if we didn't have His words to comfort us, to challenge us, to teach us, and to lead us to God?

What if He never died on the cross?

What if He never rose from the dead?

What if He never sent his disciples out into the world?

Where would we be? And what kind of world would this be? How would things be different if He had not come?

“No ifs, No Buts ...”

→ “In the fullness of time, God sent His Son,
born of a woman, born under the law ...”

(Gal 4:4)

“No ifs, No Buts ...”

Jesus said, “If I had not come.” But He did come. And history itself has been changed forever. That’s what matters.

For a little over 30 years the Son of God walked on this earth and nothing has been the same since. He came and in His coming He split time itself in two. That’s the real importance of the year 2013.

“No ifs, No Buts ...”

God’s timing is perfect. Never too early or too late.

Adam and Eve didn’t know and couldn’t have known but that phrase “Seed of the Woman” was a direct prediction of the coming of Christ.

Centuries later God promised Abraham that he would have a son and that through his son and his descendants all the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3).

“No ifs, No Buts ...”

Several generations later the promise was made more specific, that a scepter would arise in Judah (Gen 49:10), meaning that Christ would be born of the tribe of Judah.

Hundreds of years later God promised David that one day he would have a son to sit on his throne whose reign would be everlasting (2 Sam 7:12-16).

“No ifs, No Buts ...”

Thus, the promise narrows from Adam to Abraham to the tribe of Judah to the house of David.

Still later the prophet Micah declared that Messiah would be born in the little village of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

Finally, Daniel was given divine insight into the exact time frame when Christ would come to the earth (Dan 9:24-27).

If Christ had not come, the promises of God
would be unfulfilled.

If Christ had not come, the world would still be
in darkness.

If Christ had not come, there would be no
bridge across the gulf of sin.

If Christ had not come, we would not know
that God is love.

If Christ had not come, there would be no
gospel to believe.

If Christ had not come, there would be no
Christmas and no Easter.

If Christ had not come, there would be no hope beyond the grave.

If Christ had not come, we would still be lost for there would be no Savior for sin.

If Christ had not come, there would be no Good News to preach to the nations.

Listen again to the words of the angel, and think of what it means for us:

“Fear not! For I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:2:11-12).

Claimant for Christmas?

We all know it is God's initiative

But He didn't give us Christmas because ..

.. We need a reason to celebrate

.. We need a holiday from the year's work

.. We need to support the business world
and provide employment for Asian sweat
shops

.. Orchard Road needs more 'fairy' lights

This is surely a strange way for a Savior to enter the world. Even the poorest child would not be found in a manger, but there He was, God's appointed "sign" from heaven.

If the world had needed education, God would have sent a teacher.

If the world had needed an army, God would have sent a general.

If the world had needed more money, God would have sent a banker.

But since the world needed a Savior, God sent a baby! And that is the surprise, and the wonder, and ultimately the delight of Christmas.

God did what we would never have done, and in so doing, He opened the door to heaven for all of us.

Let's take these reasons for Christ's coming one at a time and just let the Bible witness to each one in its own words. (Ref: Piper)

1. He came as a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45 "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The reason we need a ransom to be paid for us is that we have sold ourselves into sin and have been alienated from a holy God. When Jesus gave His life as a ransom, our slavemasters, sin and death and the devil, had to give up their claim on us. And the result was that we could be adopted into the family of God.

2. He came to call sinners to repentance.

Luke 5: 31-32 "Jesus said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. First, there needed to be a ransom to be paid for sinners. Then, there could be a successful call to sinners. The call is based on the ransom. And Jesus says He came for both of these things.

3. He came to give sight to the morally blind.

John 9:39 "Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see.'" And John 12:46 "I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me might not remain in darkness."

Jesus did not merely come to ransom and to call, He also came to open people's eyes so that they can see the light and walk in it.

4. Christ came to divide households.

Matt 10:34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes will be those of his own household."

The point of this word is not that God loves division and strife. The point is that strife and division caused by true allegiance to Jesus are better than no strife and division with no allegiance to Jesus. The point is that when a person is ransomed and called and given sight, something really **radical** happens to them.

5. He came to save from divine condemnation.

John 3:17-18 "For God sent not the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already."

God sent His Son to save us from His own just condemnation and wrath. The need for salvation implies that there is a danger we need to be saved from.

6. He came to give us eternal life.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Christmas means that God sent His Son so that we could believe and have eternal life.

The Confidence of Christmas

This is Spurgeon's closing appeal: "For my own part, the Incarnate God is all my hope and trust. I come back to preach, by God's help, the gospel, the simple gospel of the Son of God.

"Jesus, Master, I take Thee to be mine forever! May all in this house be led to do the same, and may they all be Thine, great Son of God, in the day of Thine appearing, for thy love's sake. Amen."

God's Gift To You

In just a few days, Christmas will arrive and families will gather to open their gifts. God has a Christmas gift for you – wrapped not in bright paper and with fancy ribbon – but in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. It is the gift of His Son. It is for you. The gift is still there. *It must be personally received.*

You can never truly enjoy Christmas until you can look in the Father's face and tell him you have received his Christmas gift. Have you done that?

God's Gift To You

God sent forth his Son. That is, He was moving toward us while we were moving away from Him. God sent His Son into a world that didn't know He was coming and didn't care that He had arrived. There was no welcoming committee in Bethlehem.

C. S. Lewis: "The Son of God became a son of man so that the sons of man might become the sons of God."

A Blessed Christmas ... Always

The Elephant in the Room : It's like the man who is invited to a formal banquet. Upon entering the room, he is shocked to see that the middle of the room is occupied by an enormous gray elephant.

Not a picture of an elephant or a stuffed elephant, but a real, live, moving, breathing, enormous gray elephant lumbering around the room, knocking tables over and generally creating havoc. When the man goes to the head table, he asks the emcee, "Why is that elephant in the room?" "What are you talking about?" comes the reply. "I don't see any elephant." "But he's right in front of us," the man says.

“I’m sorry, old chap. I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Down the line he goes, asking each person about the elephant, and getting the same answer. Can no one else see the elephant but him? Finally, he comes to a man who can see the elephant too. “Why is that elephant here?” Answer: “We don’t talk about the elephant. That’s too divisive. Some people say there’s an elephant, others say there isn’t. So we decided to leave the subject alone.” So the banquet commences and they spend three hours talking about the meal, the service, and the lovely tableware. But no one ever mentions the gray elephant.