
The Story of Jesus

Published By Evangelist Van Billingsley

Fall 2009

Thanksgiving

The first holiday of this joyous season for Americans is Thanksgiving. As Christians and Americans we certainly have much to be thankful for, in fact as mankind created a little lower than the angels, you have much to be thankful for. The blessings of the child of God are available to all.

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his

name." (Psalm 100:4)

On this paper I could not begin to express the thanks to God that are due, but one thing in general that comes to my mind that we all should be thankful for is the Word of God.

Without God's Word we would not know from whence we came and to where we will go. We really would not know who we are. Worldly phi

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Is Christmas Christian or Pagan?

by Evangelist Van Billingsley

I will not write an in depth essay on this, but I would like to point out a few facts. We do know a lot of pagan traditions and mythological figures have been inserted into the lost worlds version of Christmas. I do not celebrate Christmas in accordance to the world's view. When spiritual Christians celebrate Christmas, we do so to celebrate the birth of our Saviour and we focus on the rich scriptural record of this world changing event. Our songs magnify our Saviour and His magnificent salvation. A Christian Christmas is in no way a pagan celebration.

I've known many to apply the passage in Jeremiah referring to the vain customs of the heathen

people who "cutteth a tree out of the forest," and "deck it with silver and with gold," to the Christmas tree. We must admit with those few words pulled out of context it does sound just like the Christmas tree, but in the context and with the text as a whole, we see a totally different picture. For limited space I'll quote only four verses:

For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that

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Our Ministry News...

From the Desk of the Editor



Since I am a few weeks late getting our fall edition written, I am devoting this issue to the holiday season. Let me assure you, I am not referring to Christmas as “holiday.” I am at the front of the line to protest, boycott and rebuke anyone who wishes to profit from this holy day we know as Christmas, yet refuse to recognize its name and purpose. I refuse to shop from merchants who fill their circulars with red and green ink or blue snowflakes and snowmen, with no mention of Christmas or advertise “Holiday Gifts” and “Holiday Trees” as though there is a special day on the calendar called “Holiday.” When I carefully refer to the holiday season, I am referring to the stretch of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year. To me this is like book ends on each side of the Christmas Season.

In our news, we are excited that we finally have our mission bus back in service. There were some delays that stretched this downtime out to exactly one year, but our home church, Oakside Baptist Church, was faithful to provide a substitute bus to us, even though this was often through hardship and extra fuel cost. Our home church also made it possible to get the transmission bill paid so I could put it back in the bus. This was a tremendous blessing for which I am deeply grateful.

Those involved in our Mission Church will be involved in a busy Thanksgiving and Christmas schedule as usual all while I stay busy with other meetings and with my home church in between, so I ask that you pray that we all be used of God during this time.

We continue to help several other ministries with web services in addition to our own sites we are maintaining and developing. We hope the web resources are a blessing to you. You will find these at sojministries.com and ifbsermons.com.

As I have stated many times in the past, we are in need of additional support and additional open doors for meetings. I depend upon your prayers in these areas. For several years now I have been limited in my travels since I cannot miss Sunday morning at our Mission Church. I have had to pass up some opportunities because the trip would not fit this schedule, and I have had to cancel some meetings that I was invited to but not officially booked (so the finances were not available to make the trips). Please pray for open doors and support so that we can be used more in His service.

As we wind down this year, I would like to wish all of you a wonderful Thanksgiving, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

A Servant of Christ,
Evangelist Van Billingsley

“Christmas”

(continued from cover) --

it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. (Jeremiah 10:3-6)

This passage is exposing the vanity in the details of building an idol to call a god and bow to, the works of man's hands, which must be carried by man and cannot move nor do anything, evil or good. God's Word certainly forbids making graven images or likenesses to worship, yet much value is placed upon things which symbolize spiritual things such as the furnishings and adornments in the Tabernacle. If you are inclined to bow and worship a Christmas tree, then I suggest you not allow one in your home; otherwise, the Christmas tree with its many colors and evergreen twigs can represent many scriptural truths.

There are many legends as well as outright lies concerning many Christmas traditions. The name "Kris Kringle" is absolutely not the name of some satanic, pagan god relating to the winter solstice. "Kris Kringle" is in fact a variation of the German word "Christkindl" meaning "Christ Child" passed down from Dutch traditions. This name certainly should not be applied to the mythological figure with powers of witchcraft and attributes


of deity, nor to the third/forth century preacher known as Saint Nicholas.

Very little is known about Saint Nicholas. The Catholics lay claim to St. Nicholas as well as St. Patrick, but we must remember that they also lay claim to St. Peter and others of whom they have no part. St. Nicholas lived from A.D. 270 - 346, making him a man in his fifties at the birth of the Catholic Church. He may have fallen into the doctrinal errors of the early Catholic Church, but he may have been a true preacher of the gospel. Tradition tells us that he was rich, mostly by inheritance and that he loved to give gifts to the poor and needy, often secretly, and especially around Christmas time. It is variations of his name through various languages that the name Santa Claus is derived. We know no evil of the man, only that he lived and died over 1600 years ago.

Giving gifts at Christmas can be said to have originated with the wise men who brought gifts to the Christ child early in His childhood since this is part of the Christmas story in the Word of God. It is certainly a way for us to follow His example as God gave the greatest gift known to man, His only begotten Son.

One thing I have confirmed to be of pagan origin is the Yule log. This came from a winter solstice ritual and for this cause I recommend never using terms such as "Yule Tide" in reference to Christmas. It is, however, not a complicated thing and certainly not an evil thing to celebrate a Christian Christmas.

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Thanksgiving

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Iosophers ponder these questions with vast uncertainty and silly conclusions, but His Word tells us with authority all we need to know. To interject a little humor, the world's evolution myth cannot even answer, "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" God's Word informs us that God created the chicken, then with the order to reproduce, later came the egg.

Much more, without God's Word we would not know God. God reveals Himself to us in His Word; He declares His ways which are far above our ways. Without His Word we may know that there is a God for "The heavens declare the glory of God," but while the heavens declare the glory of God, His Word reveals God! It is through His Word that I may know Him.

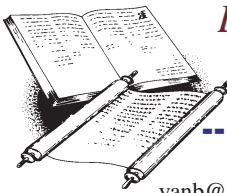
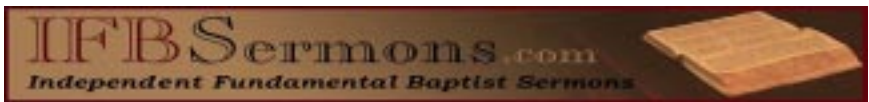
Space will not allow me to elaborate on all the rich stories of history which gives examples of trusting God and instructions on living according

to His plan for our lives which make up the rule book or the owners manual for the human life. One of my heroes, Dr. Harold Sightler, said we should teach our children that all these stories such as parting the Red Sea and David and Goliath are not just stories but actual events in history which demonstrate the power of God and His care for His people.

Among all these events, the most important begins with the Christmas story and continues through the life of Christ with His teachings and miracles, then His death burial and resurrection. Without God's Word we would not know the love of God. We would not know the greatest love story of all. He reveals that we are sinners and what our fate would be, but also declares His love in that He paid our sin debt.

Knowing all that, I am further thankful that His Word reveals how I might please Him and how I might praise and honour my Saviour.

Without His Word I would not know!
--VB



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proclaiming

The Story of Jesus

-- A Missionary to our Homeland --

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