

The Abiding Word

Back To The Bible & Let The Bible Speak

December 25, 2019

Reflections No. 6



PROVERB FOR THE DAY

One of the key methods I have learned over the years for dealing with the everyday challenges that living throws my way is to meditate on the Word of God each day as I walk with God.

I have found that reading the Proverb for the day in the morning and reflecting on that Proverb and seeing how I can put it to action in my life as I go through the day has become a great faith builder and strength when trials and conflicts come my way.

Each day has its own Proverb and in one month I have applied all 31 Proverbs ready to do it again the next month. It really works, try it.



WE ARE AS LIKELY TO ACT OURSELVES INTO A WAY OF THINKING, AS TO THINK OURSELVES INTO A WAY OF ACTING.



ABOUT REFLECTIONS

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Christmas!

The following adaptation was first printed in the Abiding Word December 1972
by Perry O. Newton

Christmas is many things to many people...a time for revelry...a time for giving and getting...a time for religious observance by tradition...a time for remembering loved ones and those with special needs.

We know the Bible contains neither command nor example for observing the anniversary of Christ's birth but His death, burial and resurrection. We know that Christmas is not a religious holy day ordained by God. But we can appreciate the fact that many people's hearts and thoughts are made more aware of the blessings of God through Christ at the holiday season of December.

Religiously, there are three basic attitudes one can observe with regard to Christmas. One is the extreme position that Christmas is a holy day that God has intended for us to observe in some special way...that it is a time of special worship services and remembrances of the birth of Christ as ordained by God. On the other extreme is the attitude that recognizes the Bible is silent about any such day of observance called Christmas and they are conscientiously opposed to any mention of Christmas, whether it be carols, the exchanging of gifts, the fables of Santa Claus, or even the Christmas tree. In short, having anything to do with Christmas is forbidden on grounds it is heathen and irreligious.

Perhaps there is a middle ground where the beautiful traditions of Christmas can be observed and enjoyed without offending any religious conviction that is based upon the truth of the Bible. And after all, it is the Bible, the Word of God, that is our authority for all matters religious, and it is our authority toward observing the traditions of Christmas. This middle ground, if it can properly be called that, recognizes the silence of the Bible on the subject of Christmas, knows the traditions behind our customs, and observes the holiday with a spirit not unlike that which prompts us to observe Independence Day or Thanksgiving Day.

Many people will be surprised to learn that Christmas is a fairly recent custom, thought to have had its start in the 12th century. There is no mention of any Bible church observing and memorial to Christ's birth. We do have the command to remember Christ's death, and we do have instructions and example to observe this memorial of Christ on the first day of the week. So it is the death of Christ, not the birth, God would have us remember. Even if we sincerely wanted to follow the Bible instruction to follow a memorial to Christ's birth, it would be most difficult as we do not know the date of Christ's birth and have no way of finding out.

Since Christmas traditions do not get their authority from the Bible, have you ever wondered how it all got started? Perhaps this will help...

Santa Claus as an American symbol of Christmas is a composite of folk traditions from many countries, brought by immigrants who merged their traditions with the practices of early English settlers of this country. He may be based on a real person of the 4th century whose kindness and generous acts gave rise to the legends which have made him popular and revered.

The giving of gifts originated with the Roman practice of giving fruit, pastry, or gold to friends on New Year day. In England, the feast of Saint Stephen, December 26th, is called Boxing Day...a time when the alms boxes in the churches are opened and the contents distributed to the poor. Today, many people center their giving on the needy, the elderly, and the children.

Candles perhaps had their origin in the Jewish feasts of Rededication of the Temple. Candles particularly were cherished by the Irish during a time of religious suppression. They were placed in windows to guide religious leaders and as a signal the house was a Christian home. If today we only always remember Jesus as the light of the world to guide.

The singing of Christmas carols is a very old tradition. Until the 13th century most were in honor of the nativity of the baby Jesus, and they were very solemn and song, *Adeste Fidelis*, is thought to have been written in 1274. Carols originating in the United States include *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, *Jingle Bells*, and *White Christmas*.

The custom of decorating homes and churches with evergreens may have begun in ancient times. The Romans exchanged tree branches for good luck on the first day of January. The English brought the custom over into Christmas. Decorations on trees were first used in Germany, as was decorated cookies and fruit and eventually candles. Some authorities consider the tree a survival of pagan worship of ancient Rome and Egypt.

Mistletoe and holly have always been popular traditions. The Druids thought mistletoe to have miraculous powers and the Romans thought it to be a symbol of peace. When enemies met under mistletoe, they discarded weapons and declared a truce. From this perhaps comes the custom of kissing under the mistletoe. Some have alluded to the thought about the thorny crown of Christ, but this does not have any basis for fact from the Bible.

Christmas is celebrated all over the world with special foods. Turkey, a favorite of this country, came to us from Mexico. A suckling pig is eaten in many countries. A boar's head was popular in medieval England, as was roast peacock. In Brazil, with its warm climate in December, Christmas really takes on an atmosphere of the carnival and festival.

From these few traditions of Christmas we can see that it is a mixture of many customs of many lands...not a teaching from God's Word. Some are derived from pagan customs, some fanciful dreams, others perhaps of history.

We have a story to tell...

A thrilling story of God's redeeming love!

It's a message of grace and mercy: "Come unto me and I will give you rest." All men can find forgiveness and peace in Christ through whom we have direct and personal contact with God.

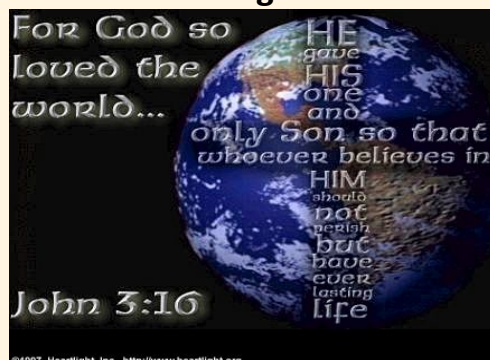
It's a message of resurrection: Christ emerged from the tomb as victor over all evil forces of our world. Love, righteousness, truth, unselfishness, and eternal life are ultimately invisible.

It's a message of victory: The power that raised Christ is available to all men, here and now, to enable us to live triumphantly.

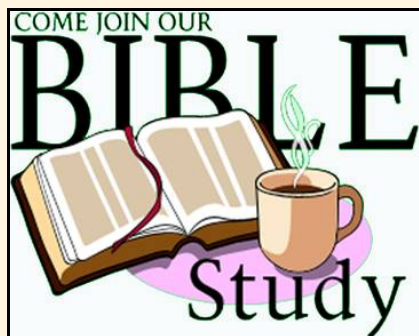
It's a message of recreation: Men are transformed from self-centeredness, greed, lust, and impurity to live no longer for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and rose again. (2 Cor.5:15)

It's a message of freedom: The emphasis of the treasure of one soul set free from sin and bondage to participation in Divine joy and liberty in life and death.

We have a message for the world!



An Invitation!



Each Wednesday evening at 6:30 PM we host a Bible Study in our home.

We are currently in the Book of Hebrews.

Starting January 8, 2020 we will begin a series on the Letters of Paul starting with Galatians.

If you are near and able,

Joy and I invite you to join our study group.