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Christmas

The Watchtower Reprints, December 15, 1903, p. 3290

“...especially when we remember that all of these glories and blessings and privileges are ours because of the great redemptive work accomplished by him whose entrance upon the work is celebrated by Christmas day. Although we cannot agree that this is the proper day for celebrating the birth of our dear Redeemer, but must insist that it was about October first, nevertheless since he did not intimate his desire that we should celebrate his birthday it is quite immaterial upon what day that event, of so great importance to all, is celebrated. Upon this day, so generally celebrated, we may properly enough join with all whose hearts are in the attitude of love and appreciation toward God and toward the Savior.”

The Watchtower Reprints, December 1, 1904, p. 3468

“Even though Christmas day is not the real anniversary of our Lord’s birth, but more properly the annunciation day or the date of his human begetting (Luke 1:28), nevertheless, since the celebration of our Lord’s birth is not a matter of divine appointment or injunction, but merely a tribute of respect to him, it is not necessary for us to quibble particularly about the date. We may as well join with the civilized world in celebrating the grand event on the day which the majority celebrate - ‘Christmas day’ “

(continued)

**The Watchtower Reprints, November 15, 1907,
p. 4094**

“It might interest you to know that we are already offering the books for ‘Christmas gifts.’”

The Watchtower, December 15, 1926, p. 371

“Student of the Scriptures also know that the birth of the babe Jesus did not take place in December; yet because of the general belief upon this point by most people, it seems to be an appropriate time to speak the truth concerning his birth and the purpose thereof. The Scriptural testimony, supported by extraneous facts, shows that the birth of Jesus occurred approximately October 1st. The event is so important that it is always appropriate to call it to the minds of the people, regardless of the date.”

The Watchtower, December 15, 1979, p. 5

“It is clear, therefore, that Jesus was not born on December 25. Rather, the available evidence points to about October 1 of 2 B.C.E. Hence, celebrating his birth through Christmas observance on December 25 is totally inappropriate for those guided by the Holy Scriptures.”

The Watchtower, December 15, 1983, p. 7

“We all need to face up to the fact that Christmas and its music are not from Jehovah, the God of truth. Then what is their source? Reason should suggest that they are from someone whose sole aim now is to mislead as many people as possible. The Bible tells us that this is the goal of Satan the Devil... Yes, Satan the Devil can ingeniously make Christmas music appear to be of God and the singing of it a Christian duty that honors Him and His Son. In reality, it does just the opposite.”

(done)

in the name and merit of him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

David's warfare with the enemies of the Lord, and with the enemies of the kingdom and law which the Lord had established in Israel, were continued through David's career, and these very properly represent the warfare which all the Lord's beloved ones must endure faithfully if they would abide in his favor. Loyalty to the principles of the divine government is of prime importance; the royal banner must be lifted high; our lives must be risked and be given in defence of the divine character and teachings if we would be counted worthy of the kingdom of glory, if we would belong to the house of David, the beloved, which the Lord has promised shall be established forever—the house of Christ, the house of sons.

We review Solomon's peaceful reign and note how its opening years were typical of the blessings of the noontide of the Millennial kingdom. The glories and wisdom and wealth of Solomon were but trifles in comparison to the wisdom, honor and riches which God has promised to those who love him. Respecting the faithful overcomers, we remember it is declared that they shall know even as they are known by God, that they shall share the glory, honor and immortality of their glorious Head and Master.

We remember, too, the typical temple, and its construction from materials previously prepared during the Levitic reign, and how this prefigured our preparation as living stones for the glorious temple of the future, in which God shall make his presence known to all the families of the earth for their blessing and uplifting, and for the joy of all those who shall respond to the blessed influences of the Millennial kingdom. The thought of the preparation of these stones causes us much comfort and joy respecting the trials and difficulties of this present time, as we realize that they are working out for us and in us preparations for the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which will be ours if we are

faithful when we shall be brought together in glory as the spiritual temple of the Lord.

This review is perhaps as appropriate a lesson for the closing Sunday of the year as any, especially when we remember that all of these glories and blessings and privileges are ours because of the great redemptive work accomplished by him whose entrance upon the work is celebrated by Christmas day. Although we cannot agree that this is the proper day for celebrating the birth of our dear Redeemer, but must insist that it was about October first, nevertheless since he did not intimate his desire that we should celebrate his birthday it is quite immaterial upon what day that event, of so great importance to all, is celebrated. Upon this day, so generally celebrated, we may properly enough join with all whose hearts are in the attitude of love and appreciation toward God and toward the Savior.

The habit of giving little remembrances one to another at this time of year seems to us specially appropriate. God is the great giver of every good and perfect gift. He is continually giving and we are continually receiving from him; but amongst all his gifts the one of greatest importance to us is the gift of his Son to be our Redeemer. While, therefore, thanking the Lord for this great gift and for the great plan which centered in it, it is appropriate that we cultivate in our hearts the spirit of liberality, generosity, and that we allow this spirit to exercise itself to some extent—according to our conditions and circumstances—toward those with whom we have contact, especially to the members of our own household. We recommend that every little gift on this occasion should, so far as possible, represent or be accompanied by some little remembrancer of the great gift—something to draw the mind of the recipient to the fact that the great gift of God in Christ is and should be in the minds of all who give or who receive the trifling exchanges of the season.

REQUESTS FOR PILGRIM VISITS, 1904

The following information is very important in connection with arrangements for "Pilgrim" services. There is no charge for these services, nor for the traveling expenses; nor are collections ever to be taken up. We expect that all friends of the truth will be glad to entertain the "pilgrims," during their brief stays, with "such things as ye have," but where circumstances do not permit this, the "pilgrims" are prepared to pay their way. If you desire to be remembered by us when we lay out the routes for these "pilgrims," please answer the following questions—on a postal card or on separate paper from your letter. You need not repeat the questions, but merely number the answers, thus. No. 1—Yes (or No). No. 2—Twice a week—Sunday and Wednesday (or whatever may be the truth). No. 9—Sunday at 3 p. m. at Bible House, 610 Arch Street; Wednesday 8 p. m., same place (or whatever may be the facts of your case). And thus with each question.

If you cannot answer all the questions reply to as many as possible. Neglect to send in such requests will be understood to mean that the "pilgrim" visits of 1903 were not appreciated, and that you think it undesirable to have them continued so far as possible in 1904. Requests of 1903 hold good until January 31, 1904. "Pilgrim" routes are laid out sometimes several months ahead and cannot well be altered; hence the necessity for our having full information and in time.

ANSWER AS MANY AS POSSIBLE OF THESE QUERIES

- (1) Are regular meetings now held in your vicinity?
- (2) How frequently?
- (3) What is the present average attendance?
- (4) Is request for pilgrim visits the publicly expressed wish of those who usually attend meetings?
- (5) Will suitable places be secured for parlor meetings?
- (6) Can suitable room for a public meeting be secured?
- (7) At what date are leaders or elders chosen?
- (8) Give full name and address of regularly elected elders,—that arrangements for pilgrim visits may be committed to them.
- (9) Give addresses of meeting places and hours.
- (10) To whom should the pilgrim be referred for entertainment?
- (11) If no regularly chosen elders, give at least one address in full, beside your own.
- (12) Give your own name and address in full (state if colored) and any other information likely to be useful.
- (13) If not on the railroad give name of proper station and your distance from it, and the direction. State also if a conveyance would meet the pilgrim at station and return him to it.

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS

LUKE 2:40-52.—JANUARY 3.

For the first six months of the new year the International Lessons turn again to the New Testament, beginning appropriately enough with the childhood of Jesus.

The more we think of it the more marvelous it seems that the Gospel narratives record so many of the particulars of our dear Redeemer's ministry—miracles, teachings, etc.—yet never once descend to the discussion of commonplace events, nor of our Lord's sayings or doings other than those directly connected with his ministry. This is one of the strongest internal evidences that these books were written under divine supervision. Our experience with the writings of men in all ages assures us that it would be almost impossible for four men to write biographies of one person, such as these four Gospels are, without entering into social features and events. Our Lord's mother is barely mentioned, and this only where her life touched particularly with that of Jesus. Her husband, Joseph, was probably dead at the time our Lord's ministry began, yet no mention is made of this fact either.

Respecting our Lord's life, previous to his consecration at

thirty years of age, we know scarcely anything. The four Gospels merely bring to our attention his miraculous birth, Herod's jealous fury, and the escape of the child before the massacre of the innocents, followed by the little incident of our lesson, which occurred in his twelfth year, and the declaration that he increased in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. How brief the record, yet how suggestive! It would have been no part of the Gospel to have explained the details of his life as a boy, as a young man, etc. It might, indeed, have satisfied the curiosity of some to have told us whether he was a farmer or a fisherman or a carpenter, matters about which people seem inclined to dispute. Undoubtedly the Lord's way in this matter was the better one. Our minds are more drawn to the important features of the Lord's work by reason of the brevity of the sketch given us of his earthly life and interests.

The important thing for us to know is simply stated, namely, that he was the beginning of the creation of God—the first born of every creature; that in his preëxistent condi-

The Taylor Cylinder, found in Nineveh in 1830, and now in the British Museum, describes Sennacherib's conquest of Judah in the time of Hezekiah. The stone records of Assyrian history, called the 'Eponym Canon,' discovered in 1862, in Nineveh, by Sir Henry Rawlinson, help us to gain a more exact knowledge of the dates of this period."

Our Golden Text, which constitutes the caption of this article, contains a valuable thought for any occasion, but one especially suited to this review. Looking at the history of God's earthly people, Israel after the flesh, we can readily see that all of their difficulties and failures to attain to the blessings that were before them, were closely associated with neglect of the truth set forth in our Golden Text. They did not sufficiently sanctify the Lord God in their hearts and let him be the only fear and only dread—fear to displease him, dread to come under his reproof. On the contrary, they were prone to forget the Lord and all the blessings and mercies they had received from him and the obligations they were under to him.

They forgot, too, that a part of the covenant entered into between the Lord and them was that if as a people they would honor him and serve him he would bless and honor them, but if as a people they rejected or neglected him, they were to have special disciplines and corrections. Their neglect of the Lord, their seeking without the Lord to establish themselves and to have the assistance and co-operation, and to adopt the manners, customs, etc., of foreign nations, all these were a part of their failure to properly worship the Lord and serve him alone. How great was their mistake! And yet we are to remember that a remnant did not make this mistake, though they were few. This

remnant already received a blessing in the present life and are to have a still greater share in the favors of God in the coming age.

Similarly nominal spiritual Israel has neglected the counsel of this Golden Text, and, instead of having the Lord first, has been disposed to forget the Lord and to affiliate with the world, to seek worldly favor and co-operation. Fear to displease the world has largely controlled churchianity; desire to have the world's favor and approval has apparently been more important before the mind of churchianity than the approval of the Lord and a fear of the loss of his favor.

As a result we see today worldly customs in the professed church of Christ, and note that these worldly customs have drawn into the nominal church, as they were intended to do, large numbers of the world, unjustified, unsanctified, "tares," and that these now quite overwhelm the few who are loyal to the Lord and the spirit of his Truth. Nevertheless there is today, and has been all throughout the Gospel age, a "little flock," a "remnant," which did indeed trust the Lord, and which did indeed sanctify the Lord God in their hearts and make him alone their fear and him alone their dread—fear to displease him, dread to lose the light of his kindness, his favor. We trust, dear friends, that the majority of those who read these words are of the latter class. If so all things are working together for good to such, because they love the Lord and have been called according to his purpose, and are seeking to make their calling and election sure by so running as to obtain the prize.

"THE PRINCE OF PEACE"

ISAIAH 9:1-7.—DECEMBER 25.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."—R. V.

Even though Christmas day is not the real anniversary of our Lord's birth, but more properly the annunciation day or the date of his human begetting (Luke 1:28), nevertheless, since the celebration of our Lord's birth is not a matter of divine appointment or injunction, but merely a tribute of respect to him, it is not necessary for us to quibble particularly about the date. We may as well join with the civilized world in celebrating the grand event on the day which the majority celebrate—

"Christmas day." The lesson for the occasion is a most happy choice, fitting well to the series of lessons it follows.

The first verse seems much better translated in the Revised Version, thus: "But there will be no gloom in her that was in anguish. In former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations." The Prophet penned these words probably shortly after the ten-tribe kingdom known as Ephraim had gone into captivity to Assyria. Zebulun and Naphtali were the names of the principal districts of Ephraim; and Isaiah, prophetically looking from those desolated lands of his time, under the guidance of the holy Spirit, points out that in the latter time a great blessing is coming to those very lands.

It was centuries after Isaiah's prophecy that our dear Redeemer appeared among men and spent most of his time, did most of his mighty works, and performed most of his mighty miracles in these lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, called Galilee, which in the time of Isaiah had been denuded of its Jewish population and had been settled by Gentile emigrants. "Galilee of the Gentiles." Subsequently these Gentiles gathered more particularly in the vicinity of the city of Samaria, and became known as Samaritans, and, noting the hopes of the Israelites, were inclined to claim a certain share in the blessings belonging to the people into whose lands they had been introduced. The Jews, however, disowned them as being still Gentiles, and would have no dealings with the Samaritans, as the Apostle pointed out.

Our Lord himself instructed the apostles to go not in the way of the Gentiles nor into any city or the Samaritans to announce him, declaring that he was not sent to any but the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He again declared to one of these Samaritans, "Ye worship ye know not what: we [the Jews] know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22) Outside of the Samaritan districts all of Galilee became repopulated with Jews, though they represented generally the less noble class, so that it was rather as a mark of disrespect that our Lord and the apostles were called Galileans, Nazareth of Galilee being our Lord's home in his youth—a disesteemed city, as in the expression, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Our Lord indeed was born in Bethlehem, a more honorable city. Under divine providence he was taken to Nazareth, to the intent that a certain amount of odium might at-

tach to him and to his cause. Thus often the Lord permits some unfavorable influence to attach to the Truth, to the intent that none may receive his message except from the love of the Truth—that none should be influenced to receive it from any earthly consideration.

THE LIGHT SHINED IN THE DARK VALLEY

The second verse of the lesson fitted well to Galilee: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." As our Lord declared, "The light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." He was the light of the world and was in the world and the world knew him not. But there is a higher and deeper and broader sense in which these words are to be understood—they apply to all peoples who have been favored with the opening of the eyes of their understanding during this Gospel age.

The people of Galilee in the day of our Lord's personal ministry, and other parts of the earth since with a similar humble class of people, have more or less had amongst them representatives of the true light, and in every case the light has shined in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not, as our Lord declared to be the case. Only a few appreciate this shining now because, as the Apostle declared, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not"—the eyes of their understanding are so darkened by false doctrines, misunderstanding and superstition that they cannot see those glorious things which can now be seen only by the eye of faith, the eyes of their understanding being opened.

That the prophecy was not confined to the people of Galilee is evident from the last clause of the second verse, "They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." The land of the shadow of death is the whole world, for the shadow of death has been on the whole world ever since the first transgression in Eden, ever since the curse or sentence of death was pronounced against our race. As the Prophet David describes it, the Lord's true people are blessed even while in the present valley and under the shadow of death; he says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me." It is to this class who walk with the Lord, who trust him, that the true light now shines—not as the glorious Sun of Righteousness, as it will shine by and by when the Millennial kingdom is established, but merely as the little lamp. "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, a lantern to my footsteps."

This lamp shines not for the world but for those who are the Lord's special people, to whom the light of his revelation, the lamp of enlightenment is granted. All these thus walking in this valley, under the guidance and care of the great Captain of our Salvation, have indeed seen a great light in him, have seen a light which the world sees not. But, thank God, the world's time to see the great light is shortly coming, drawing nigh. As soon as the present work of selecting the church,

in this instance (Nehemiah's commission) he made a considerable alteration, substituting another date of his own, so as to adapt the reign of Artaxerxes to his own theory.

"The date which stands in our Bibles for the 20th year of Artaxerxes is B. C. 446. This makes the commencement of his reign B. C. 465; but the date fixed by the best and most nearly contemporary historian will put the matter in a different light. Thucydides mentions that the accession of Artaxerxes had taken place before the flight of Themistocles. This authorizes us to adopt Ussher's date and to place the commencement of the reign 473 or 474 B. C. This would give the date of 454 or 455 B. C. as his twentieth year and the date of the commission."

It appears that Archbishop Ussher was the first to establish the date of Nehemiah's commission as 454 B. C. as a result of lecturing on the 70 weeks of Daniel in Trinity College, Dublin, in 1613. Other critics who support the date given in DAWN II. are Vitringer, Kruger and Hengstenberg, as well as Tregelles, above quoted. With much love, I remain,

Yours in the Lord,

J. P. BURNS,—England.

"SCRIPTURE STUDIES" AS CHRISTMAS GIFTS

DEAR FRIENDS:—

It might interest you to know that we are already offering the books for "Christmas gifts." We find that many secure their Christmas presents several months ahead, and that this month is the one in which many are very pleased to secure "such a beautiful, appropriate, and above all such a reasonable [in price] gift!" Often we can get orders for several sets in one home, in view of the fact that the books make such splendid gifts. Today we got more than one order on this account. We mention this because we think it might help wonderfully during the next six weeks in securing orders from people who would perhaps not buy for their own use. We say, "Many are taking them for gifts, and it is of course a compliment to a friend's intelligence to give him a book, and especially this kind, and you get the three for only 98c!"

With much Christian love and appreciating more and more the great privilege of laboring in the harvest field, we are,

Yours in Him,

J. AND L. HUTCHINSON,—Colporteurs.

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

Dear Brother Russell:—

Being my Pastor in a very special sense to me, and knowing of your deep interest in all who understand, even to a limited degree, the Harvest Message, I am taking the liberty to write you on a subject that has been on my mind for a long time.

I am sorry, very sorry to say it, but many times I have found, on close acquaintance with the brethren in the truth, men who professed full consecration, that they neglected their families so very badly relative to the truth. Seemingly anxious to spread the truth amongst their friends and neighbors, yet they made no provision for their wives, so that they could attend the meetings, and would even talk before their families in such a way as to leave the impression that maybe the truth was not for their wives and children.

I confess this is beyond my comprehension—how a man with brains enough to comprehend the truth, and after reading the six volumes of MILLENNIAL DAWN and the TOWER, could or would do or say such!

A man can leave all the cares of the home and the care of the children to a perhaps not too strong wife, and spend all of his spare time while at home reading; and Sunday morning, instead of helping his wife and encouraging her, just get up and eat, dress and leave, and let her know he expects a hot dinner when he returns from the class, and it is no wonder she cannot go. It certainly doesn't look fair to me. Just nominal church people do better than that.

From the depths of my heart I pity the man who has the truth and objects to his children attending the nominal church Sunday school and makes no effort to teach his children and never has family prayer unless some of the colporteurs or elders call on him. These things are so. I wish I could believe otherwise.

Several cases have come to my personal knowledge where the wife was really hungering for fellowship with the class and believed all the truth she could understand, and whose husband, while himself attending the class every Sunday, was the real cause that hindered her. I feel confident a special, pointed article from your pen would do good to many.

Yours in the service of the King,

—, —Tenn.

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

GETTING READY FOR FEDERATION

Unquestionably the splitting of Christendom into numerous denominations since the Reformation has been productive of a spirit of moderation in sharp contrast with the period in which many were racked, maimed, burned at the stake, etc., as "heretics." When we have pointed out that the proposed Federation of Religions would again put great power into the hands of a united majority and possibly revive the persecutions of the past, we have been laughed at. We are told that the world has so changed that persecution for religious belief would be unthinkable.

Within a month we have heard of two professed "ministers of the Gospel" whose remarks imply that nothing is lacking but the favorable opportunity for them to light the fires of persecution. Besides the most refined modes of persecution, by slander and ostracism, there may yet be opportunities for as barbaric martyrdoms for the truth's sake as were practised in our Lord's day.

REV. DR. PATTERSON'S CHRISTIAN LOVE

"There was an exciting episode at the Monday meeting of the Philadelphia ministers, and the Rev. Dr. R. M. Patterson, pastor emeritus, was the centre of it. His assignment was a discourse on John Calvin. He gave the ministers a surprise by advocating capital punishment for other felonies than murder—and for flagrant heresy. According to one reporter, he said: 'Those who spread blasphemous and immoral doctrines should also be put to death.' According to another reporter, he added that burning at the stake was too good for them."

The editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, in answer to a query as to the very words of the reverend gentleman, replied (Oct. 18):—

"We are sorry that you should ask us to print the very words used by Rev. Dr. R. M. Patterson in his recent outburst. They were reported as follows: 'If I had my way about it I would have an executioner called in to deal with all heretics and blasphemers. Burning at the stake would be too good for those who revile religion and take the Lord's name in vain.

The growth of heresy is such today that nothing but measures such as this can stop it.'"

Not all Presbyterians, however, feel so bitterly toward the non-elect heretics; for we read further:—

"The Rev. Dr. Henry C. McCook replied to the Rev. Dr. Patterson. 'My blood boils,' he said, 'at what I have just heard, and it astonishes me to think that a Presbyterian minister should utter such sentiments.'"

THE SPIRIT IS WILLING

Evidently, some of the "doctors of the law" in our day are as willing to do violence as were those who stoned Stephen. Their spirit is willing but their flesh is weak—because public sentiment would not stand for it. But we expect to see public sentiment grow in the same direction under the stimulus of the Federation of the Churches.

Recently the Editor preached at Morgantown, W. Va., to a large audience, which gave close attention for more than two hours. Shortly after a man who was present met one of the ministers of that city who asked him if he had heard the discourse. He replied, "Yes! and I enjoyed it very much. Did you attend?" "No," replied the minister, "I would sooner have joined in stoning him out of town!"

It is presumable that only lack of courage held back this Reverend Doctor of the Law of Love from enjoying himself at our expense. Poor blind leaders of the blind! We are so glad for them that God has a glorious plan in which they may yet share—when "all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped." Verily it is written, "They that hated you, that cast you out [rejected you] said, Let the Lord be glorified! [We do it for the good of churchianity!] But he [Christ] shall appear to your joy and they shall be ashamed."—Isaiah 66:5.

METHODIST RE-UNION IN ENGLAND

By means of re-union a new church was created in Great Britain on September 17. This event, says Dr. Robertson Nicoll in *The British Weekly* (London), "was a historic day of the twentieth century and marked an epoch in the Christian church." Three Methodist denominations, known as the Meth-

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EARTH'S RIGHTFUL GOVERNOR

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."—Isaiah 9: 6.

WITH the coming of the Christmas season all Christians have something to say about Jesus. That is supposed to be the time of his birth. Most of the professed Christians at this season of the year give the three wise men wide advertisement by highly colored cards picturing them, by cantatas, and by divers and numerous other ways. Satan has ever been on the alert to see to it that he and his agents are to the fore and get plenty of advertisement. By this means he turns the minds of the people away from the Lord. He has deceived most of the people about Christmas as well as about many other things. Students of the Bible know that the wise men were not representatives of the Lord but were tools of Satan, used by him to carry out his conspiracy.

The Scriptural account of the wise men is set forth in Matthew 2: 1-16. This record, together with corroborative facts, shows that the vision had by the wise men, and the light which they followed, were approximately two years after the birth of the child Jesus. Satan seized upon the incident and has worked it overtime for the purpose of turning the minds of men away from God and his beloved Son and from the true facts concerning the birth of the Savior and God's great plan of redemption.

Students of the Scriptures also know that the birth of the babe Jesus did not take place in December; yet because of the general belief upon this point by most people, it seems to be an appropriate time to speak the truth concerning his birth and the purpose thereof. The Scriptural testimony, supported by extraneous facts, shows that the birth of Jesus occurred approximately October 1st. The event is so important that it is always appropriate to call it to the minds of the people, regardless of the date.

HIS LOVING KINDNESS

It is written: "God is love." Few of earth's creatures have ever understood the full import of that statement. Love is the perfect expression of unselfish-

ness. God's love for man has been made manifest in many marked ways. The Scriptures were written for the benefit of men who love God, that all such may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3: 17) God desires his people to learn and to have their hearts comforted by a knowledge of his plan, and for this reason he caused the Scriptures to be written. (Romans 15: 4) Unselfishness prompted the Lord God to do this. The making of the record is no profit to him. He did it for man's benefit. After having written his Word he then makes man acquainted with it, and permits the light from his countenance to shine upon that Word with increased brilliancy for man's benefit as man makes progress in the narrow way.—Prov. 4: 18.

In the early days of man's experience God provided that his beloved Son should eventually come to earth and be born of a woman in order to become man's Redeemer. It has been his loving kindness for man that has caused God to unfold his purposes gradually and to show man the outworking of his plan to redeem and bless him. As man comes to understand the Word of the Lord his faith in God increases and his desire also grows to be unselfish and to be devoted wholly to the Lord.

A PROPHECY

When Isaiah wrote the above text, "Unto us a child is born," the Child had not been born. The words he wrote applied to a future time; hence these words constituted a prophecy. Isaiah could not understand the full meaning or import of his own words, nor could any man prior to the giving of the holy spirit. Isaiah did not know about that. Why then did the prophet say, "Unto us a child is born"? Whom did he mean by "us"? Primarily he meant the natural house of Israel, which house constituted God's chosen people, whom God had selected and set aside for his own purposes. Israel after the flesh foreshadowed spiritual Israel, and the prophecy had more particular reference to the latter.

Certain faithful Jews before the birth of the Child

evidence indicating that Jesus was born in the early *autumn* month of Ethanim (September-October).

AN OBSERVANCE THAT IS REQUIRED

It is clear, therefore, that Jesus was not born on December 25. Rather, the available evidence points to about October 1 of 2 B.C.E. Hence, celebrating his birthday through Christmas observance on December 25 is totally inappropriate for those guided by the Holy Scriptures.

Yet the lack of a specifically stated birth date for Jesus should not disturb us. After all, the only birthday celebrations of Bible record are those of worldly rulers.—Gen. 40:20; Matt. 14:6; Mark 6:21-28; John 18:36.

Nevertheless, Jesus should be remembered. To that end, he instituted the Memorial of his death, often called the Lord's Evening Meal. Christ did so on the last night of his earthly life, shortly before he gave "his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matt. 20:28) Using the emblems of unleavened bread and wine to represent the body and blood he was about to offer, Jesus had his faithful followers partake, and urged: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26) Hence, although true Christians have some interest in knowing when Jesus was born, it is the death, not the birth, of Jesus Christ that they are to commemorate annually.



OF ALL the messages published throughout the centuries, the "good news" set forth in the Holy Scriptures has had the greatest motivating power for good. The Bible refers to it as "the good news of the kingdom," "the good news

about Jesus Christ," "the good news of the undeserved kindness of God," "the good news of God," "the good news of peace" and the "everlasting good news." (Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:1; Acts 20:24; Rom. 15:16; Eph. 6:15; Rev. 14:6) This "good news"



with lyrics telling children that he is real do not change that fact. Furthermore, such music ascribes to Santa the all-knowing quality that only Jehovah God possesses. Should God-fearing parents teach their children to believe and sing such things? Should they pretend to their children that the pagan Santa Claus is linked to the Christianity of the Bible?

Wise parents do not bribe their children to be good. Yet Christmas music leads children to believe that if they behave an imaginary Santa Claus will leave them toys. The bribery is there—subtle, but unmistakable. You can appreciate that such ideas can damage the moral fiber of children in their formative years. Jehovah declares that “foolishness is tied up with the heart of a boy; the rod of discipline [not bribery with Christmas toys] is what will remove it far from him.” (Proverbs 22:15) The conclusion should be clear—Christmas songs about Santa Claus are a gross deception. They can only undermine respect for true Bible principles.

Idealistic, starry-eyed little children need to feed on the “bread” of God’s truth. Their inquisitive minds cannot be satisfied with ‘stones’ of falsehood.—Matthew 7:9.

Who Is Behind It?

We all need to face up to the fact that Christmas and its music are not from Je-

hovah, the God of truth. Then what is their source? Reason should suggest that they are from someone whose sole aim now is to mislead as many people as possible. The Bible tells us that this is the goal of Satan the Devil. So you can appreciate why Christmas and its trappings can be perfect tools for his efforts. They tickle the senses while blinding the mind to Bible-based truth. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Satan knows the powerful effect music has on humans. In diverse churches and temples around the earth he cunningly camouflages his God-dishonoring teachings and customs with sweet melodies and lovely lyrics. So why should it be different with Christmas music?

Quite apropos here are Tertullian’s observations on pagan entertainment. This second-century professed Christian wrote:

“Grant that you have these things that are pleasant, things both agreeable and innocent in themselves; even some things that are excellent. Nobody dilutes poison with gall [something both distasteful and poisonous] . . . The accursed thing is put into condiments well seasoned and of sweetest taste. So, too, the devil puts into the deadly draught which he prepares, things of God most pleasant and most acceptable. Everything there, then, that is either brave, noble, loud-sounding, melodious, or exquisite in taste, hold it but as the honey drop of a poisoned cake.”—The Shows (*De Spectaculis*), chapter 27.

Yes, Satan the Devil can ingeniously make Christmas music appear to be of God and the singing of it a Christian duty that honors Him and his Son. In reality, it does just the opposite.—2 Corinthians 11:14.

Those seeking to gain Jehovah God’s favor that leads to eternal life will not let themselves be deluded by the deceptive power and beauty of Christmas music. They will shun it as “the honey drop of a poisoned cake.”