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## Christmas and the Incarnation: Can We Discern Some Religious Truth Amidst Gross Error?

Eric V. Snow, sermonette notes, Dec. 19, 2009, UCG, Ann Arbor

Do you think this “the most wonderful time of the year”? Do you feel any “holiday cheer” yet? Do you want some more “Christmas spirit”? Only the most media-averse hermits could possibly avoid the world’s current obsession with Christmas. Example: Lobby of office building I work in has a big Xmas tree with presents and a radio rigged up to play loudly Xmas songs. But, can we discern some actual religious truth amidst all the rank commercialized materialism and thinly veiled paganism? Can we as true Christians perceive a flickering glimmer of spiritual light in this vast gloom of pagan materialistic darkness? So now today let’s focus like a laser beam on the crucial religious truth that Christmas nominally celebrates:

S.P.S. God humbly chose to become a man in order to die for our sins and to give us eternal life.

First, let's understand why true Christians should discuss this doctrine at all. Of course, the world obscures this religious truth by mixing up with it so much paganism and materialism during the time of the winter solstice each year. But true Christians shouldn't shy away from the doctrine of the incarnation merely because the world mixes a lot of paganism when teaching it. Esp. a problem now since some in COG deny it.

Here's the principle of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: The world mixes truth with error.

“Line item veto” vs. “package deal”: Let's not reject or avoid discussing a religious truth merely because people in the world also talk about it. Let's be carefully discerning in order to distinguish religious truth from religious error. Let's avoid knee jerk reactions based upon who teaches something as being

necessarily false. Instead, let's focus on what is said, and compare it with the Bible.

Practical application: Radio station choice dilemma at Lafarge, when people wanted to change station back to Christmas music, and it was up to me.

Not an act of virtue to turn radio dial from (say) "Joy to the World," "Little Drummer Boy," "Do You Hear What I Hear," or "God Bless Ye Merry Gentlemen" in order to listen to (say) Mick Jagger sing one more time, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction," Def Leppard's "Photograph," or ACDC's "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap," Whitney Houston's "Saving All My Love for You" and "Queen of the Night." Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night," "Night and Day."

So now, since I've explained why true Christians should be willing to discuss this doctrine, let's focus on what it teaches.

Phil. 2:5-8

A true exercise in humility: God became man in order to die for humanity. And by emptying Himself of His Glory, and by dying so humbly, Jesus set an example of humility that true Christians should aspire to.

v. 6: “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (RSV), (ambiguous, but “to be held onto” more natural meaning than “to grab”).

v. 7 Kenosis, “emptied Himself.” RSV better.

John 1:1-14

Crucial general passage. Important to remember when dealing with people who deny Jesus is God. The incarnation, or God turned flesh, is a true doctrine. Jesus was God the Son also, not just the Son of God. How many of you have had a Jehovah’s Witness pay you a visit at home? (Raise hands). They deny that He is God. Some also associated with the Church of God also now deny Jesus is God. They are Arians (Jesus pre-existence before birth) or Unitarians (no pre-existence). (Define differences). Doctrine of

atonement crucial: God Himself died in order to provide means for forgiveness for sins for humanity, not someone who was only a man.

**So in conclusion:** Of course, pagan rituals, false religious beliefs, and materialistic overkills totally dominate the Christmas holiday. Nonetheless, strangely enough, this false holiday still upholds a central truth of the Bible. True Christians should still be thankful that God humbly became man in order that that man could become God.

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