

Weekly Bible Reading – Week 20

- ◆ Sunday — 2 Thessalonians 3:1 – 1 Timothy 2:1–7
- ◆ Monday — 1 Timothy 2:8 – 5:2
- ◆ Tuesday — 1 Timothy 5:3 – 6:21
- ◆ Wednesday — 2 Timothy 1:1 – 2:26
- ◆ Thursday — 2 Timothy 3:1 – Titus 1:9
- ◆ Friday — Titus 1:10 – 3:15
- ◆ Saturday — Philemon 1:1 – Hebrews 2:4

Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven (James 5:13–15 NLT).

Carrell Arrington ✦ Linda Bailey (recuperating) ✦ Jo Byrnes
Joyce Coones ✦ Sleatha Gore ✦ Essielene Henderson
Faye Kilpatrick ✦ Gary Ogden (Plant City)
Allen Jamerson (recuperating)

OUT OF TOWN

Tony & Lisa Beach are in Ocala this morning ✦ Al & Jo Byrnes are in Texas.

BIRTHDAYS AND AN ANNIVERSARY

Jerad & Marissa Black (*today*) ✦ Eleanor Carpenter (*Thursday*) ✦ Jessica Nault (*Thursday*)

Chiefland Church of Christ

Meeting at 211 NE 2nd Street in *beautiful* Chiefland, Florida
PO Box 2539 ✦ Chiefland FL 32644 ✦ (352) 493-1242

THINGS ABOVE

“If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth”
— [Colossians 3:1–2] —

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www.ChieflandChurchofChrist.com

“Jesus Is the Reason”

by Chad Sychtysz

Last year, I saw a sign on a church building that read, “Jesus Is the Reason for the Season.” Is that true?

Is Jesus the reason that people descend upon stores this time of year with unashamed greed and materialism? Is Jesus the reason why many buy gifts for those they do not even like? Is Jesus the reason why spoiled parents give spoiled children more than they will ever need? Is Jesus the reason for the ugliness of our pseudo-religious culture at this time of year?

Despite colorful lights, tinsel, garlands, and “good cheer” (often in the form of alcohol), many are lonely and miserable, resulting in depression and even suicide. Despite the attention, songs, hype, and commercialism of Christmas, our country is still riddled with child abuse, social injustice, and spiritual indifference. Despite the pious

attention that churches give to the story of Jesus' birth, religious sectarianism remains, ambitious preachers still write their own gospels, and people still offer vain worship led by vain men in a vain hope of seeking God — or at least some form of absolution.

Bah, Humbug?

Contrary to what it may seem, I'm not "Bah, humbug!" toward the holiday season. My point is: Jesus is not the reason for this institutionalized, merchandized, and materialistic season: people are. Someone says, "Then we ought to celebrate His birthday with more sincerity and less commercialism." No, we should celebrate Jesus, regardless of the calendar or any man-made holiday. We should celebrate His life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father (Ac 2:33). While we cannot (and should not) isolate His birth from the rest of His work as Redeemer, we should never overemphasize it, either. Jesus is not the reason for Christmas; He is the reason for our salvation.

A Spectacular Entrance

For all the publicity He receives at Christmas, Jesus' life on earth began and ended in humility. His mother and (assumed) father were peasants. His first cradle was a cow's feeding trough (Lk 2:7). His birth was not in a glowing, sterilized nativity scene, but in a smelly and unsanitary barn. There were no singing animals; no drummer boy; and Wise Men did not visit Him until possibly months or years later.

Nonetheless, there was something spectacular and extraordinary about the entrance of the Son of God into the world. An archangel announced His birth (Lk 1:26–28) and informed us that Jesus

would be the most special Child ever born. Indeed, He would be a "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, [and] Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6) not only to Israel but to the world. He was foretold in prophecy, conceived by God, and born of a virgin (Mt 1:18–25). Angels introduced the Child to shepherds not only as a great King, but a Savior (Lk 2:10–14).

Yet the gospels do not linger over His birth; Mark and John do not even mention it. Jesus' birth is not the end of the story, or even its beginning: the full story of the Redeemer began before the foundation of the world (Eph 3:11). The gospels emphasize the mission, work, and purpose of a suffering Savior, not His birth (Lk 24:25–27). Even Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). He did not come merely to receive sinners, but to transform them into saints. He came to gather His sheep (Jn 10:27–28) and show the world *who* God is, *what* God does, *how* God cares, and that He is a *saving* God.

Jesus did *not* come to bring peace on earth — in fact, He flatly denied this (Mt 10:34–39; Lk 12:49–53). However, He did come to make peace between God and those who would receive Him — that is the message of the angels announcing His birth (Lk 2:14 cp. ASV and ESV; Rom. 5:1–2). Jesus is not the cause of division in the world, but men's self-serving hearts are why our world is filled with confusion and greed (Jas 3:13–18). Jesus' kingdom is not *of* this world (Jn 18:36), which forces those who follow Him to separate themselves from this world (2Co 6:17).

—[TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT WEEK'S BULLETIN]—

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