

Weekly Bible Reading – Week 21

- ◆ 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

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:13–16 ESV).

Bryan Bailey, Sr. • Jo Byrnes • Joyce Coones • Sleatha Gore • Faye Kilpatrick • Essielene Henderson • Gary Ogden (Plant City)

Birthdays & an Anniversary

Bryan Bailey, Sr. (*today*) • Bryan & Linda Bailey (*today*)
Linda Bailey (*tomorrow*) • Lori Bailey (*tomorrow*)
Kellie Jones (*Tuesday*)

With the upcoming holidays we expect a lot to be traveling. Our prayer is that everyone will be safe on the roads away from and to Chiefland. May God bless is in 2009 as we strive to serve Him acceptably (Hebrews 12:28).

Chiefland Church of Christ

Meeting at 211 NE 2nd Street in beautiful Chiefland, Florida
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THINGS ABOVE

“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth”

— [Colossians 3:1–2] —

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“Jesus Is the Reason”

by Chad Sychtysz (concluded from last week)

His Birth is Not the Focus of Redemption

While celebrating one day over another may be a person’s private conviction (Rom 14:5–6), Jesus’ birth is not the focus of God’s plan of redemption. It is true that Jesus had to be born as a man in order to carry out His Father’s will—and thus we are grateful for His birth and amazed by its unique and supernatural circumstances—but we cannot make more of it than is necessary.

“Yes,” someone says, “but what about the true meaning of Christmas?” By this, one refers to giving and sharing that seems to be inspired by Christ’s birth. But the gospel is not about what we give to God, for even our finest gifts have no value by themselves. The gospel is about what God gives to us:

salvation from spiritual suffering, atonement for our sins, and grace for all the grief we have caused both God and ourselves. God did not give us a helpless Child lying in a manger; He gave us a Great King, a Living Savior, a Powerful Redeemer. In essence, He gave the hopeless a living hope (1 Pet 1:3).

We Proclaim His Death

It is a profound fact, too, that while God sent angels to announce the birth of His Son, He has sent Christians into the world to proclaim His death (1 Cor 2:2; 15:3–4). We are not filled with a morbid interest in His gruesome torture, but rather recognize all that His death has accomplished — which is far more than His birth ever could, left to itself. Christ’s atoning sacrifice is not to be celebrated with decorated trees, twinkling lights, and nativity scenes. We are not told to proclaim Him through holiday carols, Christmas cards, and special midnight services. Rather, we memorialize Him as He has instructed us through the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:23–26). In doing this, we not only remember the price of our redemption, but also “proclaim His death until He comes,” which means that we do not believe in a dead Savior but a living One. “Do this in remembrance of Me,” He has told us; He never instructed us to remember His birth.

We Live the Greatness of His Life

Not only are we to observe the greatness of His death, but we are to live the greatness of His life. The proclamation of His death is manifested in our lives, hearts, charitable deeds, and, yes, our own cross-bearing (Lk 9:23). While what we call “Christmas” is the invention of the Catholic Church and the modern retail industry, the Christian life is the product of a Christ-saved and Spirit-led heart that worships the Lord

every day of the week, every day of the year. The celebration of Christmas does not transform people’s souls, but the gospel of Christ has, does, and always will.

My Attitude Toward Christmas?

Despite having said this, I admit that I have a soft spot for the holiday season. Since my childhood, it has been a time of family, friends, and fond memories. If nothing else, it is a bright spot in the darkness of winter. But my sentimental attachment to a mere season does not change who I am; it cannot serve as the basis for my beliefs. Thus, while some may wish me a “Merry Christmas,” I wish every person would deny himself, take up his cross, and follow the Lord Jesus (Mt 16:24). By doing this, a person’s heart will be renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16) and his soul will be preserved forever (2 Tim 1:12).

Jesus is not the reason for the season, but He is the reason anyone has hope. He is the original inspiration for every genuine act of kindness. Even in our finest hour, we are merely imitators of the finest Man who ever lived. He is the reason for all that is good in the world. He is the reason for our existence, period.

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come” — yes, and He is coming again (Heb 9:28). If you stand in fellowship with God, then you have reason to rejoice indeed.

I recommend Chad’s book, *The Gospel of Grace* — you can order it from www.religioussupply.org today.

