



WHY CHRISTMAS?

MORE THAN ONE SOLITARY LIFE

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DECEMBER 22, 2013

INTRODUCTION

Why do we celebrate Christmas? What makes it different from Hanukkah¹ or Kwanzaa² or any other day? Why is the birth of one person so important that people from all over the world, every race and many nations across centuries have celebrated it together? Why are this particular day and this particular event so important?

A little history on the date – December 25th

“It comes from pagan festivals” – no, it doesn’t.

In AD 180, Irenaeus (c. 130–202), who was a hearer of Polycarp (AD 69–155), a disciple of John the Apostle, proposed based on Old Testament prophecy that Jesus was conceived on March 25th, making December 25th His natural birthdate. By 350 AD the church had established a feast on December 25th in honor of the birth of Christ. This feast would later include the Lord’s Supper or “Mass”. Christmas would actually become a holiday about around 380 AD.

The fact that Christmas is near the time of the winter solstice and numerous pagan festivals is a coincidence. But many of our Christmas traditions borrow from those pagan festivals. And, why not? God is in the redeeming process. It is completely right that secular traditions be redeemed for Christian purposes.

But Jesus?

But why would we want to celebrate the birth of a Jewish carpenter from Nazareth?

ONE SOLITARY LIFE

Dr. James Allan Francis was born in Nova Scotia, Canada in 1864 and died in Los Angeles in 1928. He became a pastor at age twenty-one and served in ministry for the remainder of his life. His first pastorate was in New York City but moved to Los Angeles in 1914. Francis was able to publish a handful of books and his sermons and publications are full of passionate encouragement for Christians to know their Lord, to rely on him, and to follow his example.

¹ Ha nuk-kah – noun: a lesser Jewish festival, lasting eight days from the 25th day of Kislev (in December) and commemorating the rededication of the Temple in 165 BC by the Maccabees after its desecration by the Syrians. It is marked by the successive kindling of eight lights. [from Google Search]

² Kwan-zaa – noun: a secular festival observed by many African Americans from December 26 to January 1 as a celebration of their cultural heritage and traditional values. Maulana Karenga created Kwanzaa in 1966 as the first specifically African-American holiday to "give Blacks an alternative to the existing holiday and give Blacks an opportunity to celebrate themselves and their history."

On July 11, 1926 Francis delivered a sermon entitled “*Arise, Sir Knight*” at a youth convention of the Baptist Young People’s Union in Los Angeles. Dr. Francis published it that same year in a collection called *The Real Jesus and Other Sermons*.

A portion of that sermon was taken out and published separately and is now known as “*One Solitary Life*.”

ONE SOLITARY LIFE

Dr. James Allan Francis © 1926.

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village as the child of a peasant woman.

He grew up in another obscure village.

He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty and then for three years was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book.

He never held an office.

He never owned a home.

He never had a family.

He never went to college.

He never put his foot inside a big city.

He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born.

He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness.

He had no credentials but himself.

He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of his divine manhood.

While still a young man the tide of popular opinion turned against him.

His friends ran away.

One of them denied him.

Another betrayed him.

He was turned over to his enemies.

He went through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed upon the cross between two thieves.

His executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth while he was dying, and that was his coat.

When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today he is the center of the human race and the leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon the earth as powerfully as has this one solitary life.

So maybe it's the impact Jesus has had on our world that give reason to celebrate his birth. You think?

Mom's story...

A mosquito's gift – aug 2003

- We know it was a female mosquito because, while male mosquitos are content on a diet of plant nectar and juices, female mosquitos are out for blood.
- Flu symptoms & deliria resulting in
- Hospitalization, staph infection, severe fever, and brain damage
- Extended care
- Home care
- Hospice care
- A decline
- A death – March 6, 2004

Making room for recovery

- Hoarders
- A curse is a blessing in disguise
- 27 medications & Alzheimer's treatment
- Edwardian, claw foot, pie table
- A book on a stand
- "One Solitary Life" and the "Mormon Jesus" (Ruth)
- Mormon belief: "As we are, God once was; As God is, we may become."

The Difference

...of three points and a poem...

Two things that make Jesus different from all others – no, make that three...

1. **Virgin Birth – demanded for deity**
2. **Sinless life** – [Kaitlyn's reminder] **evidence of deity** - If Jesus had sinned, his death would only have paid for his own sins...He could not have paid the price for ours and we would still be liable of all of our sin.

1 Peter 2:22 (HCSB)

He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth;

2 Corinthians 5:21 (HCSB)

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

1 John 3:5 (HCSB)

*You know that He was revealed so that He might take away sins,
and there is no sin in Him.*

3. Resurrection – power of deity

We tend to focus on the cross, on Christ's death and His payment for our sins. But it is Christ's resurrection that gives value to his death and gives us power over our sin.

1 Corinthians 15:17

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

Crucifixion was common – The Romans crucified tens of thousands of people and 5 other major civilizations used crucifixion as punishment for enemies of the state. Over the centuries, hundreds of thousands have been crucified. Christ's crucifixion and death was no different than many thousands of others.

But Christ's resurrection from the dead is totally unique. While others have been resurrected or resuscitated with help from others, they all eventually die again, this time permanently. Christ's resurrection is crucial to us because through His God-powered, permanent resurrection we have power over death – his resurrection is what gives us the ability and the hope to live the Christian life.

Romans 6:4 (HCSB)

*Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as
Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,
so we too may walk in a new way of life.*

Christ's death on our behalf is crucial to us because it pays for our sin. But once our sin is paid for, it's history! We are told not to focus on our sin or our past but to focus on our new life in Christ through the power of His resurrection.

VIRGIN BIRTH

And this brings us to the first point, the Virgin Birth

Luke 1:26-35 (HCSB)

²⁶ *In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And [the angel] came to her and said, "Rejoice, favored woman! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. ³⁰ Then the angel told her: Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call His name JESUS. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end. ³⁴ Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?" ³⁵ The angel replied to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God."*

Why Is Christ's Virgin Birth Important?

The virgin birth is the only way God could become man.

1. **God keeps His promises**—If Jesus was born of natural conception, then the prophecies of the Old Testament were not fulfilled, God did not keep His promises, and we can't trust Him to keep His promises to us. [Matthew 1:22-23 & Isaiah 7:14]

Matthew 1:22-23

²² *Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:*

²³ *See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."*

Isaiah 7:14

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

2. **Jesus is God**—If Jesus was the son of Mary and Joseph and conceived through normal methods, he would have been just another man. There would be no essence of deity in him. The virgin birth sets Jesus apart as being both fully human and fully God.

Luke 1:35

*'The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God.'*

3. **Jesus is Holy** – Luke 1:34 also tells us that Jesus is holy – set apart for God's service. He came with a calling.
4. **God is Omnipotent** – He can do things that are impossible for us to comprehend, much less do. In Luke 1:37 the angel quotes Genesis 18:14 in reference to both the virgin birth of Jesus and Elizabeth's late in life pregnancy with John the Baptist, saying,

"For nothing will be impossible with God."

5. **God is self-sufficient** – The incarnation of Jesus was God's work alone.

Philippians 2:7

*"Instead He [Christ Jesus] emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave,
taking on the likeness of men."*

God didn't need Joseph's help to create the perfect God-Man, and he doesn't need our help to recreate us.

6. **God has power over our mistakes**—As Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 15:45, The first Adam God made screwed up. In Jesus, God creates a second Adam, incarnating himself into human flesh, to fix the mess the first Adam made.

1 Corinthians 15:45

*⁴⁵ So it is written: The first man Adam became a living being;
the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.*

So What?

It is the testimony of his Virgin birth, his Sinless life, and His Resurrection that Set Jesus apart from all the prophets, messiahs, presidents and kings who have ever lived. Because of Christ's virgin birth, because of his Sinless life, because of his Resurrection, in the words of Dr. James Allan Francis:

[Twenty] wide centuries have come and gone and today he is the center of the human race and the leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon the earth as powerfully as has this one solitary life.

And that is why we celebrate His birth – because his wasn't just "one solitary life," but God on earth in human form, come to save fallen man and give them a new life, a new hope, and prepare them for a new home.

So let's worship this God-Man, Lord, King whose birth we celebrate on Christmas

OFFERING PAUL BALOCHE

Closing

Since Jesus is God, each of us must deal with how we respond to Him.

Have you declared as in the words of Paul in Rom. 10:9-10, Jesus is my Lord? Do you believe in his resurrection? Have you allowed Christ to give you a new life and a new hope? If not, the celebration of Christmas is meaningless to you and this is the best possible time to make the change. If Christ is your Lord, then, this Christmas, make certain you live it out.