

Christmas: Does It Glorify God?

Christmas has always had its critics

Some people hate Christmas because of its Christian basis. *“Why spoil Christmas by bringing Christ into it!!”*

Some people hate Christmas because it adds to their loneliness; there are more suicides during the Christmas season than any other time.

Some people hate Christmas because they feel obligated to celebrate. They have to buy presents and their schedules are disrupted.

Jews sometimes hate Christmas because it reminds them of what Christians believe about the Old Testament and they don't like to feel they might be wrong about the Messiah.

Muslims largely resent Christmas because it points to the Christian claim that Jesus was the Son of God, not just a great teacher.

Jehovah's Witnesses hate Christmas as they refuse to call Jesus God and resent the teaching that we are saved by Christ's life and death.

Some Christians are critics of Christmas because they see it as largely based on Roman Catholicism, the Mass of Christ.

Some Christians point out that Jesus was probably not born in December; there is no scripture suggesting we should celebrate Christ's birth and it is so commercial.

Christmas, some Christians say, is a time when we are pressured to spend money we don't have on people we don't really like, buying them presents they don't need.

Some people say Jesus claimed He came to bring peace on earth but as that peace does not exist in many places why should we celebrate His birth?

The question we need to ask is 'Does Christmas bring Glory to God?'

Is God glorified by our celebrating the birth of His Son?

Is God glorified by non-Christians celebrating Christmas?

Is God glorified by the commercialism of Christmas?

But these are not the only questions we should be addressing!!

Are we better off to ignore Christmas?

Does the actual date of Jesus' birth determine whether His birth should be honoured?

Are Christians who do not celebrate Christmas more spiritual?

Should Christians surrender Christmas to pagans because it is commercial?

Does the celebration of Christmas make a powerful statement to non-Christians about Jesus the Christ?

Is it a good thing that Muslims and Jews are forced to reckon with the birth of the Son of God every year?

Why is this study important?

All the above questions are worth answering.

Any investigation into a Christian event can be edifying to us and a witness to non-Christians.

There is a connection between the birth of Jesus and the Glory of God.

We all need to ask and answer the question –

Is there a way by which we personally can use the Christmas season to glorify God?

There are two words used in the Bible that are referring to God's Glory.

Hebrew word "*Kabodh*" meaning heaviness or weightiness.

We sometimes refer to a person who "*throws his weight around*" because of his position or stature. God is the highest position or stature, His is "*weighty*".

Greek word "*doxa*" meaning glory or praise.

It comes from a root word meaning opinion. The "*doxa*" of God is not only the glory and praise of God but also His opinion or will.

Ephesians 1:11-12 [NIV] "*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.*"

The Will of God is inseparably connected to His Glory and Praise.

Ephesians 1:13-14 [NIV] "*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory.*"

We were created and we have been called to bring praise and glory to our Creator God.

When we combine "*kabodh*" and "*doxa*" we realise that God's Glory is the dignity and praise of God's Will.

"*Kabodh*" is also connected with light and brightness.

Isaiah 60:1-3 [NIV] "*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*"

God's Glory is something that can be visible for all to see.

Luke 2:29-32 [NIV] "*Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*"

Christ is to be a revealing light to the gentiles [those without God].

John 3:21 [NIV] *“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”*

We are to come to the light.

1 John 1:7 [NIV] *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

We are to walk in the light.

Matthew 5:14-16 [NIV] *“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

We are to become the light.

The Glory of God is associated with the coming of the Messiah

Light entering this darkened world.

First as a means of reconciliation.

Isaiah 40:5 [NIV] *“And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”*

The second time as a judge of all nations. In both visits the result is conviction of sin.

Malachi 3:1-3 [NIV] *“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,”*

Those who are called and willingly submit to His Will after the first appearing.

Then those who repent after a “little persuasion” at His second appearance.

The Glory of God was manifested to the shepherds

Luke 2:8-9 [NIV] *“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.”*

As far as we can tell, they were not seeking the Glory of God.

Isaiah 65:1 [NIV] *“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’”*

God may choose to reveal Himself [His Glory] to those who are not seeking Him and do not know Him.

We never know to whom or where God may suddenly manifest His Glory, this is so that nobody can take any credit [**1 Corinthians 1:29**].

Note that the Glory of God “*shone around them*”.

There was no visible “*origin*” like a shaft of light from heaven to earth.

Isaiah 6:3 [NIV] “... *the whole earth is full of His Glory.*”

James 1:17 [NIV] “*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*”

God’s presence does not create any darkness, shadows.

Luke 2:13-14 [NIV] “*Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.”*”

What began with one angel messenger, culminated in a great host of angels praising and glorifying God.

God loves to do the extraordinary with the most ordinary people, that is His style.

1 Corinthians 1:26-30 [NIV] “*Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*”

God desires to bring His message of reconciliation and His Glory to others.

What was the reaction of the shepherds?

Luke 2:9 [NIV] “*An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*”

Great fear, do we fear to be a light, a witness for Jesus, to bring God’s Glory to others?

Luke 2:15-18 [NIV] “*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.*”

Excitement about the good news. First they convinced themselves the message was true, then they “*spread the word*”, were excited witnesses for Jesus.

Luke 2:14 [NIV] “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.*”

This whole event was a manifestation of the Glory of God.

Can we bring glory to God out of Christmas?

Psalms 76:10 [NIV] “*Surely your wrath against men brings you praise, and the survivors of your wrath are restrained.*”

Even the actions of people that brings the wrath of God on them can bring praise [glory] to God.

God can receive glory out of anything, even if Christmas has pagan origins that bring on the wrath of God. He can overrule this and turn it to His Glory.

Remember, the Plan of Redemption had its origins in the rebellious sin of Adam and Eve prompted by Satan!!

Romans 5:20 [NIV] *“The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,”*

Behind sin is the possibility of grace abounding.

God instituted the Lord’s Supper to keep us in continual remembrance of Christ’s death. Can we deny that God allowed Christmas to emerge, in order to give attention to Christ’s birth, His first coming to bring reconciliation to all mankind?

How then might Christmas bring glory to God?

- 1) **When we honour the birth of His Son.**
- 2) **When we remind people of the reason for Christmas.**
- 3) **When we invite non-Christian friends to attend special church services.**
- 4) **When we worship God in thanksgiving for the birth of His Son, and why He came.**
 - a) **To be our saviour.**

Luke 2:11 [NIV] *“Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”*

- b) **To save us from the penalty of our sins.**

Matthew 1:21 [NIV] *“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*

- c) **Jesus was born to die, to bear all our sins and shame.**

Isaiah 53:6 [NIV] *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*

- 5) **When we remember the lonely and the poor.**

We can invite them into our homes and shower them with presents that they would never otherwise receive.

- 6) **When we are thankful for family and friends.**

We may not always have what we now have in the way of family or friends, treasure the time with them.

- 7) **When we receive a present.**

Remember God’s gift to us of His Son.

When we give a present.

Remember we are to lay down our lives for others.

Conclusion

Christmas may have its critics within and outside of the Church.

But this annual celebration of the birth of Jesus can bring glory to God and is therefore acceptable to Him.

Jesus is the personification of the glory of God.

Jesus was glorified by angels, shepherds and the magi.

Christmas can be used as an “*outreach*” through which God is glorified by the conversion of sinners.

However

There is much about Christmas that does not glorify God, such as commercialism and hypocrisy; these we must avoid.