

## ***What Are You Willing To Give Up?***

The world that we live in is not one of spiritual-mindedness. It is not a world of godliness or one of righteousness. The world in which we dwell is one full of sin and all kinds of evil. It is a sad thing to look at the world knowing that most people are not going to make it to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14). What is perhaps even more sorrowful is looking at attitudes that individuals have in the church.

Think about all the blessings we have as children of God. Look at all the many things He has done for us and what a debt we owe that we will never be able to repay. Yet, although we understand and say, "Yes, I owe a lot to God", we often fail to act as though we truly believe that. Why is it that we claim to understand the blessed state of being a child of God but do not put our best foot forward to be pleasing to Him? Do we not believe that only the faithful will make it to heaven? Do we not believe, as Jesus said, that only he who does the will of the Father will make it to heaven (Matthew 7:21)?

I believe a major reason why Christians are not as committed as they should be is because they aren't willing to give up the things of the world to live for the Lord. John said in I John 2:15, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The world and God are on opposite ends of the spectrum. How can you have both? John says later in vs. 17 that the world is passing away. It's only the one who does the will of God who will abide forever. We forget just how temporary our lives are here on this earth. We get caught up in thinking that this is most important, the here and now. It's not!! All that we have on this earth won't be here eternally. It is going to be passing away. Does it make more sense to concentrate on the things that will one day be passing on or is it better to put our efforts into that which will be here eternally? Most anyone will tell you, "Yes, we have to concentrate on spiritual things", but how many are doing just that?

What are you willing to give up to go to heaven? Many in the world expect to go to heaven but do not do anything to insure it. Many Christians expect to go to heaven but do not want to give up worldliness. Paul told Timothy that times would come when men would be "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"(II Tim. 3:4). The same thing is true today. People just have too many things to do. "I'm too busy to serve God", would fit a lot of peoples actions. Those whose busy lives interfere with their commitment to the Lord will have much time in eternity away from God to think about all the times they were too busy to be spiritual.

I ask again, what are you willing to give up to go to heaven? Are you willing to give up things that would interfere with your attendance in worshipping God (hobbies, concerts, sports, etc)? Are you willing to give up the short, tight, and low cut outfits designed only to be seen by others? Are you willing to give up talking, acting, and behaving like those of the world? Are you willing to give up worldly associations that might hinder you from being a faithful Christian? If you are not willing to give up even these few things, how can you say you are willing to sacrifice to go to heaven?

Heaven has its cost and so does the life of being a Christian, but the benefits of the sacrifice involved far outweigh the burdens of this life. Think of what Christ was willing to give up so that you could have these blessings (II Corinthians 8:9). He gave up His very life. How much of an inconvenience is it for you to live a faithful obedient life to make it to heaven? It should not be a burden at all but simply a small sacrifice for the love and kindness He showed to us. Abstain from every appearance of evil (I Thess. 5:22) so that you may reap the reward of heaven.

***- by Shane Williams***

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## ***Weak Diets Do Not Make Strong Churches***

A bulletin before me as I write contains these noteworthy items: "PINK AND BLUE SHOWER: Ladies, you are invited to attend a ... shower for ... in the church basement" . . . Fellowship meeting held last Monday night" . . . and "Cake Day was last Thursday."

If these brethren suppose that they can convert sinners and build a strong church on such a flimsy diet they will do well to consider their own record. In the same bulletin it is stated that their Bible study attendance has not grown, and their contributions are down.

Brethren, the gospel alone will build a strong church and it needs no props under it to hold it up. Sectarian churches must bolster their doctrines with feasts, fairs, fun and foolishness, but the church of the Lord has something that will stand alone – the gospel. Churches that seek crowds by offering entertainment and suppers are admitting that they do not think that the gospel is enough.

- by *L. L. Geiger*

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### ***Notes about the RELIGIOUS observance of Christmas:***

a.. "Christmas was for the first time celebrated in Rome in 354, In Constantinople in 379, and in Antioch in 388." (Commentary on Luke, N. Geldenhuys, p. 102)

b.. "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church, and before the fifth century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether January 6th, March 25th, or December 25th." (Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 5, p. 641)

c.. "The observance of Christmas is not of divine appointment, nor is it of New Testament origin. The day of Christ's birth cannot be ascertained from the New Testament, or indeed, from any other source. Christians of the first three centuries do not speak of any special observance of the nativity of Christ." (McClintock and Strong, vol. 2, p. 276)

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### ***Why No Special Christmas Services?***

Folks are often surprised to learn that we have no special religious observance of the Christmas holiday. Such practices are so common place in most denominations that many people think it is odd when we don't sing Christmas songs, decorate the church building with seasonal ornaments, and conduct special worship services. Please allow us to explain.

First, it should be pointed out that there is no lack of appreciation in our hearts for the great gift of God in sending Jesus to this earth. We praise Him for this and continually express our thanks for the salvation made available to us through Christ. Obviously, Jesus could not have died for our sins if He had not first been born. We rejoice in the fulfilled prophecies surrounding His miraculous birth in Bethlehem. Hopefully, our gratitude for these blessings extends to every day of the year, not just one special holiday.

The Scriptures instruct that "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). This means that we must have Bible authority for all of our practices. We are also warned that our worship becomes "vain" or worthless by "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). With these verses in mind, the question must be asked as to the origin of the religious observance of Christmas -- where did it come from?

A search of the New Testament reveals absolutely no indication of a special annual observance of the birth of Jesus. There is no command to do so, and the earliest Christians did not have a day set aside to celebrate His birth. Historical information indicates that Lyberius of Rome in 354 A. D first designated the date of December 25th as the birthday of Christ. Obviously, the Christmas celebration became an established practice centuries after the church began. These simple observations demonstrate that this religious holiday originates with man, not God. This is the reason why we make no effort to engage in special religious activities on the day that men have appointed as Christmas.

- by *Greg Gwin*