

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTMAS

TEXT: I JOHN 3:1-10

Introduction:

1. I am going to speak this morning on the significance of Christmas.
2. Unfortunately, the birth of our Lord is often overlooked because of the emphasis on shopping and materialism, and decorations and drinking parties, etc.
3. There certainly is a lot of pagan foolishness associated with Christmas, but I would like for us to consider the real joys of Christmas.
4. *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King* (Isaac Watts).
5. This morning I would like to preach a simple Gospel message on the significance of Christmas.
6. John 1:14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."
7. Matthew 1:23 says, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."
8. First Timothy 3:16 says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."
9. This is the significance of Christmas.

I. CHRIST WAS MANIFESTED TO TAKE AWAY OUR SINS (3:5).

1. When John the Baptist saw our Lord, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
2. And yet, the Lord Jesus Christ was manifested to take away the sin of the world long before there ever was a world.
3. First Peter 1:20 says our Lord's death "was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."
4. Revelation 13:8 says Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."
5. Many people have this notion that Jesus came to this world to teach us how to love one another. One of my favorite Christmas songs is "O Holy Night."
6. *"Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His Gospel is peace."* (Placide Cappeau, translated into English by John Sullivan Dwight).

7. Certainly our Lord did come to teach us about love, but that was not the primary reason. First and foremost Jesus came to die on the cross for you and for me.
8. Our Lord said in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."
9. The apostle Paul said in I Timothy 1:15 says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."
10. This is the significance of Christmas. This is the true meaning of Christmas.
11. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).
12. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16; cf. I John 3:1, 16).
13. First John 3:5 says, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."
14. Only the sinless Son of God could die as our perfect Substitute.
15. I already quoted the declaration of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
16. Why did John refer to Christ as "the Lamb of God"? For the same reason the apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 5:7, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."
17. The Passover Lamb was a picture and type of the sinless, spotless Son of God. That is why the lamb had to be "without blemish." Exodus 12:5 says, "Your lamb shall be without blemish."
18. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."
19. Hebrews 4:15 says our Lord "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."
20. First Peter 2:22 says, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."
21. Referring to Christ's vicarious (substitutionary) atonement, Guy King said, "Thank God, *in Him* is no sin; but *on Him* was all sin" (*The Fellowship*).
22. Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."
23. "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

24. Christ was manifest to take away our sins. This is the significance of Christmas.

II. CHRIST WAS MANIFESTED TO DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL (3:8).

1. Guy King quotes Augustine who said, "The devil made no one, he begot no one, he created no one; but whosoever imitates the devil (i.e., by doing sin, as he does) is, as it were, a child of the devil, through imitating, not through being born of him."
2. King adds, "Did not our Lord Jesus say the same thing, when, addressing His enemies, He declared, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do' (John 8:44)."
3. The devil has done much damage to this sin-cursed world, but thank God, the Lord Jesus Christ was manifested to "destroy the works of the devil."
4. That is the significance of Christmas.
5. "The works of the devil" include deception and immorality and dishonesty. The devil energizes lost sinners. He inspires them and he misleads them. And ultimately he destroys them.
6. First John 5:19 says, "The whole world lieth in wickedness."
7. Satan is a master of deception. Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."
8. Three times in the Gospel of John, our Lord refers to the devil as "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
9. In II Corinthians 4:4, the apostle Paul refers to the devil as "the god of this world."
10. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:3, 4).
11. How did the devil manage to become the god of this world? It happened at the fall of man. When Adam and Eve sinned, the devil took over this world.
12. God cursed the earth, and said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life..." (Genesis 3:17).
13. Right now this earth is cursed, and will stay that way till the Lord Jesus returns, and Satan is thrown into the lake of fire.
14. Revelation 22:3 says, "And there shall be no more curse."

15. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (3:8).
16. The Greek word translated "destroy" means, "to deprive of authority."
17. Lewis Sperry Chafer said, "Though under the restraining hand of God, Satan, according to Scripture, is now in authority over the unregenerate world, and the unsaved are unconsciously organized and federated under his leading" (*Satan*).
18. That is why I John 2:15 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
19. This Scripture is not telling us we are not to enjoy the oceans and mountains and flowers and trees and the beauty of God's creation.
20. It is telling us we are not to love Satan's anti-God and anti-Christ system. The same world that hated the Lord Jesus Christ, and crucified Him on that cruel cross also hates those of us who are His followers. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world (*this Satanic system that is anti-God*) hate you" (I John 3:13).
21. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8b).
22. How was Satan destroyed (or "deprived of his authority") at the cross?
23. Colossians 1:13 says God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."
24. Because of our Lord's death on the cross, we have been "delivered" from the power of Satan, and have been "translated" into the kingdom of God's dear Son.
25. Galatians 1:4 says Jesus "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."
26. Second Peter 1:4 says we have become "partakers of the divine nature," and have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."
27. The Lord Jesus Christ commissioned the apostle Paul and told him to preach to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18).
28. Revelation 12:12 says, "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Soon that prophecy will be fulfilled.

29. The devil knows he only has "but a short time" before he will be cast off into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:10 says, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone."
30. The Lord Jesus Christ was manifested to "destroy the works of the devil." That is the significance of Christmas.
31. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Which brings us to our third point.

III. CHRIST WAS MANIFESTED SO THAT WE MIGHT HAVE VICTORY OVER SIN (3:6-10).

1. We have here in I John 3:4 a good definition of sin. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
2. Christ was manifested so that we might have victory over sin. Yet it is by His death, not by His birth, that we have everlasting life and victory over sin.
3. However, there would be no cross if there had not been a manger.
4. Charles Wesley put it this way,
*Mild He lays His glory by,
 Born that man no more may die.
 Born to raise the sons of earth,
 Born to give them second birth.*
5. This is all by faith. This is by trusting in Christ. "Abiding in Him" (I John 3:6) means "depending on Him."
6. When we learn to abide in Christ we bring forth much fruit, because our Lord said in John 15:5, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."
7. Furthermore, our Lord said in John 15:7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."
8. Here is the secret to effectual prayer -- abiding in Christ.
9. And here is the secret to victory over sin. First John 3:6 says, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not."
10. It is good to trace this doctrine through John's first epistle. John draws a contrast between our standing and our state.
11. First John 1:7 says, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This is our standing -- we are saved, pardoned, cleansed, justified, sanctified, regenerated, and sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

12. The next verse, I John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (cf. I John 1:9, 10).
Sadly, this is our state. But victory over sin is possible because we read in I John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not..."
13. God does not want us to sin -- "that ye sin not." The apostle Paul says in Romans 6:2, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"
14. Some people have things completely backwards. They say because Jesus died for our sins, we are free to sin. That is false doctrine.
15. Rather, it is because Jesus died for our sins, that we are freed from sin.
16. Romans 6:18 says, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
17. Romans 6:22 says, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."
18. First John 2:1 says, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Provision has been made.
19. "If any man sin" indicates a believer can sin. And sadly, we know this from experience as well as from Scripture.
20. John Phillips said, "It would be an error to say that a believer *is not able* to sin...It would be true to say, however, that a believer is *able not* to sin."
21. That is a wonderful statement that should be repeated and emphasized.
22. "It would be an error to say that a believer *is not able* to sin...It would be true to say, however, that a believer is *able not* to sin. We have the means of victory over sin at our disposal, the Son of God to be our Saviour, the Word of God to be our guide, and the Spirit of God to indwell us and empower us" (*Exploring the Epistles of John*).
23. First John 3:6 says a Christian does not sin. And I John 3:8 says, "he that committeth sin is of the devil."
24. And I John 3:9 says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."
25. These Scriptures teach that a genuine born again child of God will not practice sin; he will not continue in sin. A believer may stumble on

- occasion, but for the most part he or she is on the straight and narrow pathway that leads to heaven.
26. This is because God's "seed" (I John 3:9) is in us. First John 5:18 says, "We know that whosoever is born of God *sinneth not* (does not continue in sin); but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."
 27. A Christian sins when he yields to the flesh.
 28. Galatians 5:16 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."
 29. Guy King said, "A rubber ball cannot sink -- unless it is held down. We must not let our old, sinful nature get us down!"

CONCLUSION:

1. A number of years ago, a journalist and Presbyterian minister by the name of Sherwood Wirt, wrote the following in a Christmas card:
"The people of that time were being heavily taxed, and faced every prospect of a sharp increase to cover expanding military expenses. The threat of world domination by a cruel, ungodly, power-intoxicated band of men was ever just below the threshold of consciousness. Moral deterioration had corrupted the upper levels of society and was moving rapidly into the broad base of the populace. Intense nationalistic feeling was clashing openly with new and sinister forms of imperialism. Conformity was the spirit of the age. Government handouts were being used with increasing lavishness to keep the population from rising up and throwing out the leaders. External religious observances were considered a political asset, and abnormal emphasis was being placed upon sports and athletic competition. Racial tensions were at the breaking point. In such a time, and amid such a people, a child was born to a migrant couple who had just signed up for a fresh round of taxation, and who were soon to become political exiles. And the child who was born was called, among others things, Immanuel, God with us."
2. It has now been two thousand years, but things haven't really changed all that much.
3. Yesterday, driving through the crowded streets of Manhattan, I saw Santa Clauses everywhere. Silly looking men, scantily clad ladies, some looked drunk, etc.
4. Amid all the worldly foolishness, let us not forget the true significance of Christmas.