



AND God spake all these words, saying, ² I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:1-3)

Unless you have been in a coma for the past few decades, you will know that there has been an all-out attack against both the meaning and celebration of Christmas. Even if the exact date were proven to be uncertain (and I do not believe it to be uncertain), it would still be appropriate to celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ on any given date. The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ was considered so important to the early church that they began to date all historical events on the BEFORE (B.C.) and AFTER (A.D.) of that Holy event. Though atheistic science and geologist may deny the reality of the Birth of Christ, they cannot escape recognizing that date in the calendar year, even if they opt to call it B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) or C.E. (Common Era). That troublesome event that determines that calendar date keeps haunting them.

The hostility towards celebrating the Birth of Our Lord may have begun in the more innocent years of our history, but, today, it has grown to an outward hostility so intense that any mention of the word 'CHRISTMAS' draws the ire of those who consider themselves to be the Politically Correct Police whose job is to squelch any sign of faith or religion – but especially that of the Christian religion. While prayers to Dark Prince, Allah, are even being taught to students in many American public schools, even the mention of the Christian God is forbidden and cause for suspension. How did we arrive at this dilemma of faith and freedom FROM religion?

I have read many well-meaning Christians (including even some clergy) who have attempted to defend the legend of Santa Claus and have even ascribed divine powers to him – such as the claim that he once walked on water. However, the real St. Nicolas was not such fellow. He was a good, kind, and generous bishop of Asia Minor who defended the poor and weak against exploitation. I have visited churches in the area that are named in his honor, but never have I heard or read, in the chronicles of those churches, the fads and fiction which the world lauds over this partly mythical

character. I believe the real St. Nicolas would vigorously disclaim these stories that have come to be believed by millions of children.

Santa Claus is simply a corruption of the name, St. Nicolas. When pronounced rapidly by Europeans and Americans, St. Nicolas evolved into Santa Claus.

When I was very young, I remember my parents warning me about being good so that Santa Claus would bring me good presents. Santa Claus, like our Lord, seemed to know everything about me. He knew when I was good or bad. He knew my name and age. He knew where I lived, and even where I was on Christmas Eve even if not at home. He was able to fly in his sled just as an angel across the heavens. He was OMNISCIENT. He was also OMNIPRESENT since he was able to deliver gifts around the world, and to every child, in a short 12 hour travel. I never felt completely comfortable with the Santa Claus legend. I always preferred the classical Christmas story with its carols and wonderment to that of the false figure of Santa Claus.

When I grew to know for certain that there was no Santa Claus, I wondered what other things my parents had lied to me about. If I had been less informed on Holy Scripture, I may have even thought that they had lied to me about the baby Jesus, God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost. Thankfully, the truth of the meaning of Christmas was too powerful to be dismissed as legend.

The character of Santa Claus gradually began to take the place of Jesus Christ in much of our Christmas lore. If anyone denounces Santa Claus as a fraud, he is labeled a hateful killjoy.

The myth of Santa began to really gain prominence in 1823 with the publishing of Clement Clarke Moore's "*'Twas the Night Before Christmas.*" I am sure that Moore did not intend to usurp the place of Christ in Christmas, but that is certainly the result that came about. Drawings of our Lord do not elicit much commercial fanfare, but a red suited old bishop with a bag full of gifts certainly does. We celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas, yet He has been omitted by the commercial and social world. How sad! How much more beautiful (and TRUE) is the story of the first Christmas recorded in the Gospels, and particularly, the Gospel of St. Luke, Chapter 2.

Many pop songs have been recorded concerning the 'season' of Christmas without mentioning the name of the Lord whose day it is; songs such as *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *All I want for Christmas*, *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*, *White Christmas*, *Blue Christmas*, etc. Jingle Bells was originally written as a Thanksgiving song, but was quickly adopted as a Christmas song without mention of Christ. Ironically, the song was written and first sung at a church in Savannah, Georgia where Pierpont relocated in the last years of his life. His nephew was J.P. (Pierpont) Morgan, the celebrated financier. Aren't the true songs of Christmas far more appealing and beautiful – *Joy to the World*, *Angels from the Realms of Glory*, *Noel*, *Silent Night*, *O Come all Ye Faithful*, *We Three Kings*, *Away in a Manger*, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, etc.

In the process of time, the secularizers of Christmas grew weary of the mere mention of the name Christmas even if Santa had become the central figure. Even though the central figure of Christmas (Jesus Christ) had been supplanted by Santa Claus and with musical works unrelated to the Christ of Christmas, this did not satisfy those who are offended at the mention of the Lord's name. If they admit to their being a God in Heaven, and a Lord who must be followed, they would be forced to abandon their gay (old meaning) lifestyles. So, what could they do to eliminate even that allusion of Christ in the word Christmas?

They concluded, "Let us change greetings cards from *Merry Christmas* to *Happy Holidays*" was one approach. Eliminate any scripture references in such cards.

Commercialize the season to the point that everyone's mind would be on glitter and not the Baby Christ-Child born at Bethlehem. Replace solemn Christmas worship services with drinking parties and banquets of gorging and feasting. Belittle anyone who even hints at "Merry Christmas." Expunge any acknowledgement of the meaning of the season from all public proclamations. No longer would Washington, DC have a Christmas Tree, but rather a Holiday Tree. Thankfully, we have just rid ourselves of a man in the office of President who promoted that disavowal of Christmas. Our present President is very bold in proclaiming Christmas for what it truly is.

When we celebrate Christmas, I hope we will teach our children whose birthday it is that we celebrate. I hope we will not lie about some mythical figure with powers very similar to those of God as one whom they must please. The beauty and wonder of the real Christmas story is far more compelling than a comic figure in a bishop's suit with a bag on his shoulders delivering handouts. Tell them the truth! The child can accept truth far better than the seasoned adults whose lives are tainted with sin. If we are found to be liars in one matter so great, our testimony in every other arena will be subject to question. **TELL THE CHILDREN THE TRUTH!**

Merry Christmas! May this Christmas be centered on the humble manger, a young and blessed virgin, the beasts of the field who were witness, and the lowly Joseph.