

Honoring Christ

by Dick Blackford

While many denominations are conducting special programs of entertainment during December, there will be no special religious celebration of a mass in honor of Christ at the Church Of Christ.

One may wonder why a church which wears the name of Christ and whose members refer to themselves as “Christians only” is letting this season pass without such a celebration. The answer is, we are doing it in honor of Christ. “How is this possible?” you may ask. By showing respect for what He said as well as respecting His silence.

Many refuse to believe that religious error is just as wrong as moral error. It does make a difference how a person worships God. The Pharisees were guilty of numerous religious errors (Matthew 15). Jesus said, “*But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men*” (v. 9).

“Good Intentions” Can Be Iniquity

King Saul expressed good intentions in bringing back the spoils of battle with the Amalekites. He was going to use them in sacrifice unto God. Samuel said, “*Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams*” (1 Samuel 15:22).

Jesus depicted some at the judgment as arguing their case on the basis of their good intentions. “*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many wonderful works?*” (Matthew 7:22). His reply to them in verse 23 was, “*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*”

Our ears should perk up at that word — **iniquity**. We cannot afford **not** to know its meaning. It is from the Greek word **ANOMIA** — *literally*, lawlessness, without law. It is translated “*lawlessness*” in several passages, among which is 1 John 3:4 (**NKJV**) — “*Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness*” If a thing is without law (law**less**), it means there is no law for it (on its behalf).

We do not question the sincerity of those who engage in an annual emphasis of Christ’s birth. But there is no law on its behalf. It is not the thing the Lord said to do in remembrance of him. When he instituted the Lord’s Supper he said, “**THIS** do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Some have wanted to add to what Christ said and others have wanted to subtract.

First Century Vs. Twentieth Century

The Bible does not tell us when Jesus was born. Nobody knows. The Scriptures do not command an observance of His birth, but of His death and resurrection — which churches of Christ commemorate every first day of the week. There is no example of New Testament Christians celebrating His birth. Nor is there a necessary inference that they should have. Can anyone find a law **for** it?

Twentieth century religion is a dramatic change from first century Christianity. But it happened so slowly not many noticed — or care. Surely, God in all His wisdom and knowledge could have thought of a religious celebration of the birth of Jesus — if He had wanted it! “It is hard for us to learn to apply the distinction between serving God as God wishes to be served, and serving Him according to our own wishes and notions” (J.W. McGarvey).

Away From The Manger

There is no Christ-child. Another writer observed: “Everyone loves a baby. And, no doubt, Jesus was a cute, fine ‘bouncing’ baby boy at one time. Two thousand years later it is easy to identify with the baby Jesus and be moved by the innocence of the child. But we’ve missed the point of His life. As an infant He made no demands of a twentieth-century people. But as an adult He did. And here’s the rub! It was as an adult that He required the stringent demands of discipleship. As an adult He commanded obedience and a transformed life. As an adult He demands attention and conviction from the twentieth century. But how sad it is that a world that should be looking to the cross has instead turned to the manger” (Wallace Alexander).

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