**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**Real Meaning of Christmas - God Moves**

**Matthew 1:18-25**

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

December 24th In the Year of Our Lord - (Anno Domini A.D.) 2021

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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**Matthew’s Gospel**

1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows:

 when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph,

before they came together

she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

 19 And Joseph her husband,

being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her,

planned to send her away secretly.

 20 But when he had considered this,

 behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,

"Joseph, son of David,

do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife;

for the Child

who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

 21 "She will bear a Son;

and you shall call His name Jesus,

for He will save His people from their sins."

 22 Now all this took place

to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,"

which translated means, "GOD WITH US." (Isaiah 7:14)

**Isaiah 7:14** "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

**Isaiah 9:6** For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

**Isaiah 9:7** There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

 24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep

and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him,

and took Mary as his wife,

 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son;

and he called His name Jesus.

We receive many facts and truths from God revealed in this Biblical account of the Incarnation.

**1**. The long looked-for and anticipated Messiah arrived.

**2.** God’s Holy Spirit continues to work in the affairs of people.

**3.** God works through cultural norms to accomplish His goals.

 Mary did not have any previous relations but became with child.

**4.** God sends angels to deliver messages to people.

**5.** God can calm our fears in difficult situations.

**6**. God can biologically interact with people. (Mary with child)

**7**. God directed the gender of a child to be born.

“She will bear a Son”.

**8.** God’s intent/desire is for people to be saved from their sins.

 God so loves the world that He gave His unique Son to pay for the sins of the world.

**9.** Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled that God is with us.

**10.** People/Joseph can follow God’s commands for their/others good.

**What a story!**

Parents and church leaders recount this biblical story every year to children. With this account given. . . our society adds all the trappings of cultural traditions complete with Christmas Tree, mistletoe, yule log, eggnog and ole Saint Nick burrowing down the chimney with gifts for all. Well, I guess. . .it depends on if you have been naughty or nice if Santa leaves you gifts. This means that someone has been keeping an eye on you and making a list. Kind-of sounds like government and their covid vaccination list. So, all this blending of agendas. . . makes for a happy time with family and friends. However, we know that underneath all the festive wrapping is the reality that God incarnated Himself to be one of us . . . to walk among us, to live through the challenges life brings, celebrate the triumphs and persevere through the tragedies in life, to join Him in His eternal victory.

 **In The Year of Our Lord**

Here we are. . . Christmas Eve, December 24, in the Year of our Lord 2021. All over the world people are stopping to make observations about the Incarnation of God as Jesus the Messiah. We read in Scripture that Jesus’ name means “God with Us”. So, we have Jesus “God with Us” the “Christ” which is the Greek word for the Hebrew “Messiah”, meaning “Deliverer” or Savior. It is true that the Hebrews anticipated a political Messiah who would deliver them from the oppressive Romans. However, we know that Jesus rejected this role and fulfilled His main purpose in coming to be one of us. . . the role of sacrificial Savior on the Cross to be that perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is the game-changing event in world history whereby every life is impacted. God made good on His promise to bring about the fruition of Genesis 3:15.

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

**The Real Meaning**

We hear every year about not forgetting the real meaning of Christmas. . . which, we Christians know to be the Incarnation. The reality is. . . that two observations to celebrate have been joined on December 25th. . . one secular and one Godly. People may not realize. . .but the observation of Jesus’ birth to be on December 25th was joined to the secular society by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 336 A.D., in his efforts to convert the empire to Christianity. The Romans already had a winter celebration about the life-cycles they observed on earth.

I see that God invaded the secular world’s celebration on December 25th which was a pagan holiday. In fact, history records that the pagan celebration of the Roman god Saturn (god of agriculture and time) began as a single day but eventually was extended to be a weeklong festival beginning December 17 and ending on the winter solstice (December 25).

 History records that the Romans decorated their homes with greenery and, instead of working, they closed businesses, schools and courts, sang popular songs, played music and gave each other gifts. They also prepared wax taper candles as gifts to signify light returning after the solstice. Sounds and looks like many of the things we do. Like I said. . . God joined two celebrations with the goal of changing people’s focus to His agenda.

So, I see that the real historical meaning for the date of December 25th is not about the birth of Jesus Christ but about the worship of a pagan god.

**Therefore, we have the real meaning of Christmas**

**and the real meaning of December 25th.**

 To be clear, there is nothing biblically wrong with this list of activities the Romans participated. I am sure they did other things that were not considered acceptable to God. It was their focus that needed to be changed. God wanted to turn their focus from the pagan god, which they thought governed their agricultural seasons, to Him . . . the Creator of all things including the agricultural season.

I see that God is constantly moving His salvation agenda in front of the fallen world. I see this time of year to be a great time of witness and outreach for the Church as God intended.

So, the Roman government, under Emperor Constantine, marked the first observation for the birth of Jesus to be December 25, in 336 A.D. Thus, reassigning that day to Christianity. Christmas has been celebrated on that day every year since in the West, unless you are of an Eastern Christian tradition that celebrates on January 29th or 6th referencing the Day of “Epiphany” which is to commemorate the arrival of the Magi after Jesus’ birth. The fact is that the early Christian Church did not observe birthdays because that is what the pagans did. Church Fathers such as Irenaeus (c. 130–200) or Tertullian (c. 160–225) or Origen of Alexandria (c. 165–264) did not write about the birth of Christ being celebrated on December 25th.

Knowing **the real history of December 25th** brings clarity to the Christian effort to witness to the real meaning of Christmas. Therefore, we should not be frustrated by so many people caught-up in the merriment of the holiday season in December. After all, they are carrying on just like people have historically. There is nothing new here. God is the one that invaded their holiday season with the Greatest Gift. . . Jesus Christ.

**John 4:10** Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

**Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

**Romans 5:15** But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

**Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN