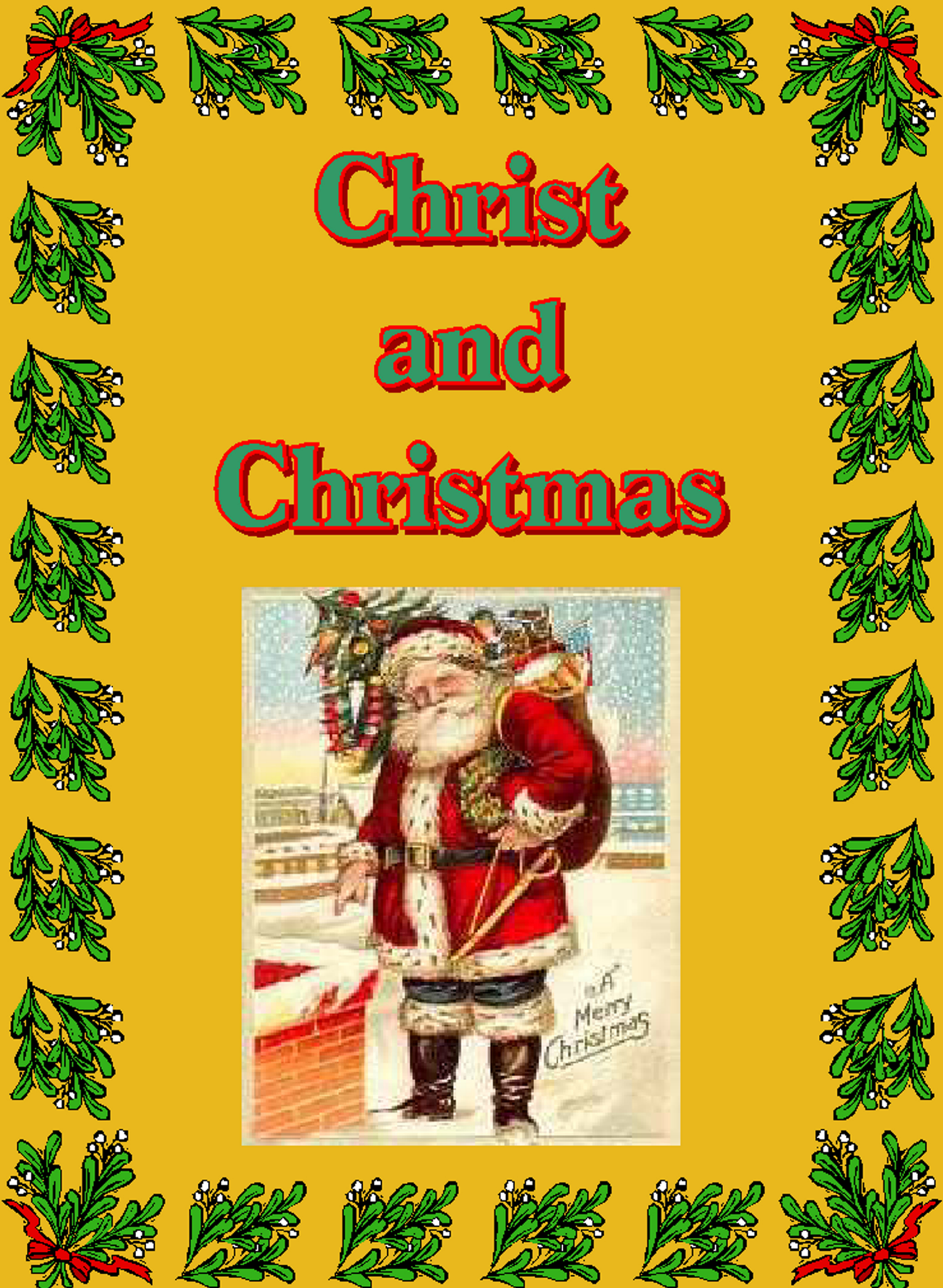


**Christ
and
Christmas**



CHRIST AND CHRISTMAS

Rather than view the subject of Christ and Christmas from the negative aspect of its being based largely on heathen practices and paganism, or to shun an exposition because commercialism has robbed its true meaning, we would like to consider this subject from the completely different standpoint that truth is stranger than fiction. That which has come down to man as fables usually has some basis of truth—perhaps 95 percent fable (or error) and 5 percent truth. Accordingly, we will present some lessons that parallel, to a slight degree, the lessons of true Christmas, that is, the spirit of Christmas as planned by the Heavenly Father.

Let us begin with the name Santa Claus, a derivative of Saint Nicholas. “Santa” is the same as “Saint,” and “Claus” is the last syllable (or an abbreviation) of *Nicholas*. Thus we have the two equivalents: Saint (Santa) Nicholas (Claus). “Nicholas” is a Greek word meaning “Lord over the people,” an appellation befitting the great Jehovah, the Creator, the Sustainer of the vast universe, the God of all, the *Lord* of all His creatures. The word “Santa,” which is analogous to the Latin *sanctus*, that is, “saint” or “holy

one,” is descriptive of the purity or holiness not only of God’s office but also of His *future intention* with respect to mankind.

In the folklore about Christmas, Santa Claus is pictured as an old man with a long white beard, as though to say he is a very old man who has lived a long life. In Scripture, God is spoken of as the “Ancient of days” (Dan. 7:9). Of course Christmas is not a type in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, but we can, nevertheless, gain some helpful lessons, even though the representation is crude and the fable is given more credence than the truth of God and His message in the Bible. Saint Nicholas is a crude representation of the reality of God as the Ancient of days—the One who was, who is, and who ever will be in the future. As the Psalmist says, “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psa. 90:2).

Santa Claus is portrayed as dwelling in the far distant and inaccessible reaches of the North Pole. And the Bible tells that in the final analysis, true and everlasting promotion comes not from the south, the east, or the west but from Jehovah, who dwells “in the sides of the north” (Psa. 75:6; Isa. 14:13). None can “bind the sweet influences of Pleiades,” a cluster of stars in the north, which is reputedly designated as the direction of God’s great throne (Job 38:31). Pleiades is known as the gravitational center of the

universe. Thus we find that, indeed, God dwells in a high and lofty clime, in a far distant land, inaccessible in heaven, in the direction of the north (Isa. 57:15).

In the allegory, Santa Claus gives gifts to good children, rewarding them with proportionately better gifts. Actually Jehovah, who dwells in the universe and is the God of all, rewards those who are His children with proportionately good and better gifts (James 1:17; Matt. 7:11).

Santa Claus is pictured as having a very jovial disposition. This characteristic is usually illustrated by red cheeks, warm clothing, and a hearty laugh. The Scriptures indicate that God is not merely the God of justice and of power but that *He is love*. In fact, love is His most cardinal attribute (1 John 4:8). Again we see the aptness of a comparison.

Fatness is in the picture. Santa Claus is usually portrayed as a fat, jolly person. The fatness signifies that he is rich, that he is in the position to give a lot of gifts. Thus fatness becomes a symbol of the plenitude of his ability to give gifts to others, the abundance of his wealth, and his corresponding ability to share or dispense these blessings to others without exhausting his own riches. In reality, how true this quality is with regard to God! Not only are the “cattle upon a thousand hills” His, not only is the

earth Jehovah's footstool, but the whole universe belongs to Him, and this wealth is inherent in His personage as in *no other being* in the universe (Psa. 50:10; Matt. 5:35). God is the *source* of all blessing—and there are *inexhaustible* riches of God in Christ.

Red clothing with white fur trim is customarily associated with Santa Claus. Red, the primary color, represents that Santa Claus has a great deal of warmth. He is jolly out of the goodness of his love. Red is a warm color, an example being that on Valentine's Day, a red heart is emblematic of human love, one for another. When love (red) and justice (white) are blended harmoniously together, the result is the creation of an atmosphere of happiness to others and on behalf of others.

Indeed this picture represents the God of love, for He *so loved* mankind that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that whosoever would faithfully believe into Jesus might have everlasting life (John 3:16). Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, and this truth will be made known to all in due time and order (Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:5,6). God gave the supreme gift, a gift that cost something close to His heart: the blood, the death, the sacrifice of His own dear Son, which is love of the *highest* form (2 Cor. 9:15). God so loved the world that He gave Christ to die on behalf of fallen humanity so that they might

be saved—so that those who respond properly in the day of the resurrection will be greatly blessed and helped up the highway of holiness (Isa. 35:8).

Actually, in the *present life* and in *this age*, God is not trying to save the world. Remember what Jesus said when the disciples came to him, requesting a further explanation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. He explained in depth what the symbolism represented, and they said, “We understand what you are saying, Master, but why didn’t you speak plainly to the people in the first place instead of using parables? Why didn’t you say to them what you are saying to us now?” Jesus replied, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to those who are without, it is not given” (Matt. 13:10,11 paraphrase). In other words, the message of salvation during the present life is meant for those with a hearing ear (Matt. 13:13-16). God is not now attempting to convert the world. He is merely calling out a class to be the Bride of Christ, and that call is an *invitation*—it is not issued under threat of punishment. Those who love Christ in the present life respond on a voluntary basis and are drawn to the Cross to become followers of Jesus. Those who love Christ now (or first) will get the chief reward in the Kingdom soon to come, but in the next age, it will be absolutely mandatory for every knee to bow and every tongue

to “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11). These two subjects can be harmonized; namely, those who respond in the present day under unfavorable conditions can become footstep followers of the Lord, the called class (1 Pet. 2:21), and the rest of mankind, the vast majority, will be made to walk up the highway of holiness under the “rod of iron” rule in God’s Kingdom (Rev. 2:27; Matt. 6:9,10). Of course God’s love is manifested in both ages, but the grace Christians now have supersedes that of the future—and so much so that the Apostle Paul says the love Christ has for his Church in the present age is an indescribable “mystery” (Eph. 5:32).

There is another interesting fact. Unbeknownst to mankind, and especially during the nighttime of the Gospel Age, God Himself has been busily engaged in the preparation of gifts and other delightful surprises that will ultimately be dispensed to all mankind, but particularly to those who are His good children in the present life, to those who mend their errant ways now. The Scriptures declare: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a [future] day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30,31). In other words,

pertaining to the next age, God has given *assurance* that He will fulfill His promise, and the assurance is based on the fact that Jesus Christ died. Jesus did not die a vain death, saving only a mere relative handful, for in the next age, all of the ready, willing, and obedient of the world will be saved.

In regard to the gifts God is preparing, Holy Writ states: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). Similarly in the fable, in inaccessible regions of the North Pole during the long winter season, in the dark days of the year (symbolic of trouble), Santa Claus prepares gifts, and then, at man’s extremity, at the midnight hour, as it were, he comes in his sleigh laden down with rich gifts. Not only does God have gifts for His future Kingdom, but also He dispenses rich gifts in the present age. For example, the Apostle Paul tells of the gifts God is now giving to the Church: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” for the Church’s blessing and edification and understanding of His Word (Eph. 4:11). These gifts have been a real boon to mankind, enabling them to become followers of Jesus and to know with intimate detail what they should do in the present life. And Jesus’ followers are even enlightened by prophecy to understand, to a certain degree, what

God is now doing with the earth. In the next age, gifts will be given to mankind. There will then be no need for one man to say to another, “Know the LORD,” for all will know Him, from the least unto the greatest (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:11). At that time, the waters of truth will cover the earth as the waters cover the seabed (Isa. 11:9). How great are the beneficent purposes of God! He has been preparing these gifts, and they will ultimately be dispensed in His own due time and order.

The mythical Santa Claus comes in a sleigh drawn by fleet reindeer that travel through the pathless sky, bearing gifts to all. The benevolence of Santa Claus is universally appealing. Hence, in varying degrees, the custom is observed in most of the nations of earth today in one form or another. Although people realize Santa Claus is a myth, thinking about him cheers their heart. But how much more the heart should be cheered to realize that in reality, Almighty God, the God *of all*, is indeed the true Saint Nicholas—the LORD of the people—and that He has the ability to dispense gifts in any condition or clime in the earth.

The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy compartment of the Tabernacle of Moses is likened to a treasure chest. In the Ark were the golden pot of manna (a picture of immortal life and the ability to give life to others), Aaron’s rod (of judgment and

acceptability of election) that budded, and the tables of the Law. The Ark is a picture of The Christ, Head and body, who will, in the Kingdom, dispense to mankind the treasures of divine grace that are stored within.

The Ark of the Covenant is also called the “chariot” of God, for it is God’s figurative conveyance or means whereby He will deliver the goods to mankind for their blessing (1 Chron. 28:18). The Ark is the chariot of God, who walks on “the wings of the wind” (Psa. 18:10). And so, in the fabled Santa Claus picture of Christmas, the reindeer that travel through the sky are only a feeble demonstration of that which is truth—that the God of all is able to dispense blessings anywhere He pleases. No obstacle or condition can bar Him access to those He wants to be the recipients of His love. Therefore, the Ark represents the eternal purpose of God: His foreordained arrangement of riches of grace for mankind in The Christ, Head and body, the hidden “mystery” (Col. 1:26,27). The Ark, the vehicle of God’s blessing to man, is God’s hope chest for the world. The swift reindeer are crude representations of the four cherubim (that is, God’s attributes of Love, Power, Justice, and Wisdom), which are described in Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10. There the cherubim (God’s attributes) are pictured as traveling with the speed of light at the slightest bidding of Him who sitteth upon the throne above. The highly

symbolic language is a figurative representation of the glory of God (Ezek. 1:28).

The gifts of Christmas are usually associated with a traditional Christmas or evergreen tree. According to the basic meaning of the word “cedar,” even in Latin, it is the tree of everlasting life. A Christmas tree is cut down and removed from its natural habitat, the forest, to be later raised to an upright position in the home. In the Bible, a tree can picture a man. For instance, the wicked are likened to a green bay tree and the righteous to a palm tree (Psa. 37:35; 92:12). When the blind man’s sight was partially restored, he said, “I see men as trees, walking” (Mark 8:24). Just as the Christmas tree is cut down out of the forest and raised, so from among mankind, one man (Jesus) was cut down in crucifixion (death) and later raised as the resurrected Christ to an upright position. Not only was Jesus raised on the Cross, but in the final analysis, he was resurrected to be the ever-living Lord. Messiah was cut down “out of the land of the living,” out of the forest of mankind (Isa. 53:8). The hope of life and blessing is centered about the death and resurrection of Jesus. The evergreen tree, picturing Christ, in whom is life, was sacrificed or cut down so that life might come to others. The star (often lighted) at the top of the tree seems to be peculiarly harmonious with this thought, identifying the tree with the

personage of Christ, the greatest gift of all. Jesus said of himself, "I am ... the bright and morning *star*" (Rev. 22:16). Balaam prophesied, "There shall come a *Star* out of Jacob," indicating that from among the Jewish people, there would be a leader among men (Num. 24:17).

The Christmas tree is gaily decorated with tinsel and adorned with gold and silver. At the foot of the tree are many presents. There are different lights and attractions on the tree. The lesser lights (aside from the star above) would represent those whom Jesus has used as his "stars" or messengers in the present life. Seven particular stars are mentioned in Revelation 1:20, and there are still lesser lights. Jesus said of his followers, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). In bearing the gospel to others, Christians are declaring the unique character and message of Christ. Jesus is the central theme and doctrine, and all the lesser lights are to attract attention not to self but to the grand fruition that is symbolized in the star above so that men will lift their eyes to the Star of Hope, the only hope in this dark night of sin.

Associated with the Christmas season is the singing of carols, which helps us to observe a spiritual Christmas in our hearts and lives by recognizing what God has done for us. And there will be a great anthem of rejoicing when the world of

mankind realizes in the coming resurrection that the opportunity of life will be granted to all because of what the Savior has done. At present, only a pitiful few recognize Jesus' life and his *true* role in the plan of salvation for others, but this message will be extended to everyone who has ever lived, including those in the grave. When they recognize that the greatest gift of God is centered in Christ, they will indeed sing hymns, anthems, and carols to God for the wonders of His grace. God has prepared a great "feast of fat things" for the future, in which all mankind will be rejoicing in the provisions of divine grace that will be available to all in that great day, following the completion of the elect Church class of the present age (Isa. 25:6).

God is looking for a people who voluntarily forsake all and follow Jesus in the present life that they might be "kings and priests" with Jesus in the next age to dispense these blessings (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). As a reward, they will have a better resurrection and a greater honor in the privileges of the Kingdom. Of course the implication is that if there are to be kings and priests, there will also be subjects under them who become the recipients of the blessings.

In summation, we see that God, the Eternal One, dwells in the Pleiades of the north (not the North Pole). He is the Holy One

(the Santa) of Israel, the Lord of the people, the God of all the earth, the Ancient of days. The warmth of His love is symbolized by Santa's red garment. Holly leaves with their red berries represent drops of blood, showing God's love and the costliness of Jesus' sacrifice. God's good disposition is pictured by His richness of grace to mankind. He is indeed wealthy—all things are at His disposal, and gifts are being prepared unbeknownst to mankind. Jesus Christ has already been cut out of the land of the living. The Son died in preparation for the blessing of mankind in the future, so that all people might have hope. God has given assurance that judgment will be brought forth unto victory and righteousness (Matt. 12:20).

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