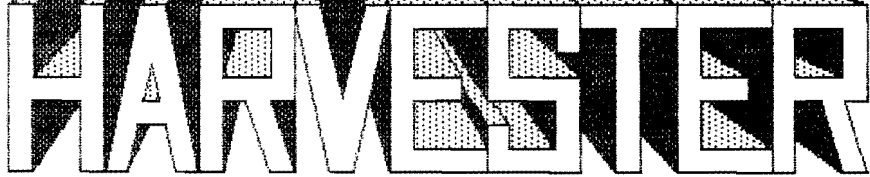


THE



# HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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No. 108

## THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTMAS

Once there was a certain man who lived in a small town. He was ordinary in every way possible except he had a very inquisitive nature, wanting to know this and sometimes that. One year in particular he decided to find the true meaning of "Christmas" by devising the following plan.

On the first day of December the young man would post several announcements in town: "Whoever can provide the truest meaning of Christmas will win a prize of \$1000." The young man would judge each person's statement and would choose a winner before Christmas eve. He smiled cleverly as he posted

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the final sign. Surely someone's entry would contain the answer he sought!

The next morning several of the town's people lined up outside his door. One by one he let them inside and took down their statement. He soon discovered there was a wide variety of ideas concerning the meaning of Christmas.

Naturally the younger children spoke about the "jolly bearded man named Santa Claus" who wore a red suit and brought all sorts of presents to the good boys and girls. Their eyes especially lit up as they explained how Santa traveled in a sleigh pulled by reindeer and how he magically entered everyone's house in a single night!

To many of the young men, Christmas meant a "holiday", that is, a day off from work. It meant a day to be with the entire family, to feast on sumptuous meals and to watch the little ones open their gifts around the Christmas tree decorated in silver and gold. Some even mentioned the task of putting up Christmas lights.

The real truth about Christmas, according to the more educated people, was that it was a pagan holiday based on the winter solstice. It was simply a festival where nations rejoiced that the shortest day of the year had passed. Then sometime in the fourth century A.D. the Bishop of Rome claimed December 25th to be commemorated as the birth date of Jesus Christ!

The town's scrooge as well presented his view of Christmas into the contest: "Bah-humbug!" He said the truth about Christmas was that it was a "big money racket" for the penny-pinching merchants. In fact, the whole season of Christmas had become very commercialized

by greedy men such as himself and he was not the least bit ashamed of it, either!

Older men and women gave a much different answer. Christmas, they claimed, was really about the spirit of giving. "It's not what you give, but the thought behind it that counts," said one wise gentleman. It was also a time of reflection on things like salvation, helping the less fortunate, and living a good moral life.

But the most convincing submittals came from the religious folk. They described the true meaning of Christmas as being the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Inside of a manger in the stable of a Bethlehem inn, the baby Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes, as Mary and Joseph and the barn animals watched. Outside, the angels everywhere sang a hymn of praise, "peace on earth, good will to all men", while the shepherds were guarding their flocks. Even three wise men riding their camels from the Orient presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the new born King of Israel!

During the next few days the young man heard hundreds of statements as people everywhere, and of all ages, tried to capture the true spirit of Christmas. Finally the day came when he heard from the last person in line. When he closed the door, he slumped in his chair and gazed at the pile of statements before him.

Then something caught his eye. Partly hidden underneath some of the papers lay a book. It was a Bible! Probably one of his visitors had left it by mistake, but why was he suddenly drawn to this one? Yes, he had his own Bible up on the bookshelf but he never took time to read it. Slowly he reached for this new Bible and opened it to where the bookmark was placed -- Matthew chapter one. He caught a glimpse of the heading, "The Birth of Jesus", and he began reading.

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Surprisingly the young man found it hard to put the Bible down. After reading the book of Matthew, he jumped into the book of Mark, then Luke, John, and Acts. When he finished the New Testament, he found himself studying the creation of *"the heaven and the earth"* in Genesis 1. After a week of solid reading, he had completed the entire Bible!

He found some very interesting things along the way. For example, the words he read were penned by holy men of God (2 Pet. 1:21) but God's Word never did mention what day Jesus Christ was actually born! Surely God knew when his Son arrived on earth and if he had wanted people to know the day, he would have said so in his Word.

The young man also noticed many inconsistencies in the Christmas story between what he had "always heard" versus what the Bible actually said. There was no mention of Jesus being born in a "stable", nor "three" (?) wise men riding "camels" from the east! There was nothing about angels "singing", either. And would the shepherds be outside with their flocks in late December? He could not even find the word "Christmas" in the sacred scriptures! Where did these strange ideas come from then?

In addition, the young man found other important "facts" missing. The Bible did not say anything about sleigh bells or reindeer or Santa Claus. He did find some verses dealing with "saints" of the church but it was obvious that "Saint Nick" wasn't one of them.

Some of the scriptures he did read were quite revealing. He discovered an OT passage which closely resembled the custom of decorating Christmas trees (Jer. 10:2-5) but this was described as a "vain" custom of the heathens! He found another passage where the apostle Paul wrote to some disciples who were celebrating special days with religious observance (Gal. 4:10-11) but Paul expressed some deep concern about such a transgression!

Whereas most people use the day of Christmas to worship God in "masses", the young man found that the early church worshipped God much differently. He read that the Christians always assembled on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) and remembered the death of Christ through the observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:26) rather than commemorating the birth of Jesus!

The young man was certainly startled by these new revelations. Now he wasn't sure what to think of the twenty-fifth day of December. One thing was straight, however. "Christmas" was NOT a religious holiday nor a "holy day", as many think today. So, who won the contest? Well, he never did find out who left that Bible on his desk but it appeared to the young man that the Bible was the only thing that really showed him the truth about Christmas.

RAY McMANUS

*ANGER is one letter away from DANGER!*

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who was Rachel's father?
2. Three of David's soldiers went behind Philistine lines to get David a drink from the well by the gate of what city?
3. At the Last Supper, who did Jesus say the twelve disciples would judge?
4. Paul said his preaching was in vain if what has not happened?
5. A soft answer turns away what?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Name the tribe of Israel that David said was to carry the Ark of God?    LEVITES (1 Chr. 15:2)
2. In Pharaoh's dream, interpreted by Joseph, where did the cows come from?    OUT OF THE RIVER (Gen. 41:2-3)
3. Where did Paul tell the Corinthians that he would stay until Pentecost?    EPHESUS (1 Cor. 16:8)
4. When a soul is saved, what is hidden?    A MULTITUDE OF SINS (Jas. 5:20)
5. When Moses' hands became heavy during the battle with Amalek, what did Aaron and Hur do?    HELD MOSES' HANDS UP FOR HIM (Exo. 17:12)

<p>WHEN A MAN SINGS HIS OWN PRAISES HE INVARIABLY GETS THE TUNE TOO HIGH!</p>
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## THE COLD WITHIN

SIX HUMANS TRAPPED BY HAPPENSTANCE  
IN BLACK AND BITTER COLD,  
EACH ONE POSSESSED A STICK OF WOOD,  
OR SO THE STORY'S TOLD.

THEIR DYING FIRE IN NEED OF LOGS,  
THE FIRST WOMAN HELD HERS BACK,  
FOR OF THE FACES AROUND THE FIRE,  
SHE NOTICED ONE WAS BLACK.

THE NEXT MAN LOOKING ACROSS THE WAY,  
SAW ONE NOT OF HIS CHURCH,  
AND COULDN'T BRING HIMSELF TO GIVE  
THE FIRE HIS STICK OF BIRCH.

THE THIRD ONE SAT IN TATTERED CLOTHES,  
HE GAVE HIS COAT A HITCH.  
WHY SHOULD HIS LOG BE PUT TO USE  
TO WARM THE IDLE RICH?

THE RICH MAN JUST SAT BACK AND THOUGHT  
OF THE WEALTH HE HAD IN STORE.  
AND HOW TO KEEP WHAT HE HAD EARNED  
FROM THE LAZY, SHIFTLESS POOR.

THE BLACK MAN'S FACE BESPOKE REVENGE  
AS THE FIRE PASSED FROM HIS SIGHT,  
FOR ALL HE SAW IN HIS STICK OF WOOD  
WAS A CHANCE TO SPITE THE WHITE.

AND THE LAST MAN OF THIS FORLORN GROUP  
DID NAUGHT EXCEPT TO GAIN  
GIVING ONLY TO THOSE WHO GAVE,  
WAS HOW HE PLAYED THE GAME.

THE LOGS HELD TIGHT IN DEATH'S STILL HANDS  
WAS PROOF OF HUMAN SIN.  
THEY DIDN'T DIE FROM THE COLD WITHOUT,  
THEY DIED FROM THE COLD WITHIN.

# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place &amp; Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
December 2 - 4	Fayetteville Road Church Atlanta, GA	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
December 12 - 16	Jigger, LA	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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## *SEVEN THINGS THAT ARE CERTAIN FOR GOD'S PEOPLE*

- Sure Promises (1 Ki. 8:56)
- Sure Foundation (Isa. 28:16)
- Sure Reward (Matt. 10:42)
- Assured Acceptance (Jn. 6:37)
- Divine Love (Rom. 8:38-39)
- Assured Immortality (2 Cor. 5:1)
- Eternal Anchorage (Heb. 6:19)

## *SEVEN THINGS THAT ARE CERTAIN FOR UNBELIEVERS*

- Exposure (Num. 32:23)
- Disappointment (Deut. 32:32)
- Leaving Earthly Possessions (1 Tim. 6:7)
- Death (Eccl. 8:9)
- Judgment (Eccl. 12:14)
- Separation from Righteous (Mt. 25:31-33)
- Banishment from the Divine Presence  
(2 Thes. 1:9)

### A NOTE OF THANKS

The editor would like to thank the churches of Christ at Sun Hill Road and Hokes Bluff for their financial support of this paper. Deep appreciation is also extended to those individuals who have contributed much to this work. May God continue to bless all of us!