

Christmas

December 25

Do You Dream of Santa or the Savior?

*Every good and every perfect gift is from above,
and comes down from the Father of lights . . .*
James 1:17

The Real St. Nicholas

In the fourth century the sainted Bishop Nicholas expressed his love and concern for mankind by giving children gifts each year on December 6th. Today, St. Nicholas's life is surrounded with more fiction than truth. Many unusual traditions are celebrated in many countries as a result of fictitious tales. When the Dutch came to America, they brought the picture of St. Nicholas, or "Santa Claus" as a fat, jolly, old fellow who rode in a sleigh pulled by reindeer. The day of gift-giving was changed from December 6th to the 25th, what was believed to be Christ's birthday.

Gift giving is a sign of love, and God is well-pleased when we follow His example and give to others. (James 1:17) Bishop Nicholas's motive was to exalt God by teaching that God gave the most important gift of all when He sent His only Son into the world to redeem us from sin. However, God's adversary the devil (I Peter 5:8) has perverted Nicholas's charitable intentions by creating an imaginary being who is beloved as much as or instead of God. In America, we know Santa Claus as a jolly old man who loves children and brings them gifts at Christmas. However, further scrutiny reveals that Santa Claus is really a counterfeit of God that has distracted many from the true meaning of Christmas.

Santa Today

Satan has cleverly characterized Santa Claus with many attributes of God, thus making him a counterfeit of God. The most well-known song about Santa admonishes this:

You better watch out
You better not cry
You better not pout, I'm telling you why
Santa Claus is coming to town.
He sees you when you're sleeping
He knows when you're awake
He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness' sake.

Santa is portrayed as someone who is watching all children at all times. Only God is omnipresent—He can be at all places at one time (Acts 17:27–28; Psalms 139:7–9). Santa also keeps records of every child's deeds. This is a counterfeit of God's omniscience—His power to know all things. Psalms 3:13 declares, "The Lord looks from heaven, He sees all the sons of men." Santa is portrayed as a being who has unlimited resources to give to children. However, it

is not Santa, but God who owns the universe with its resources, and He gives to every man as He desires. (John 1:3; James 1:17; I Timothy 6:17) Santa is also seen as being endowed with supernatural power. He can fly through the sky and fit easily down chimneys, laden with gifts! This is an attempt to copy God's omnipotence, or absolute power. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." It is the Lord alone who has unlimited power and can do what He wishes. Finally, consider the last verse, "so be good for goodness' sake." What does this mean? We should be good because God requires it, not to be eligible to obtain gifts. Furthermore, the way to obtain "goodness" is to have Christ dwelling in us, forming us into His image.

Do you ask yourself this question: What is so wrong with Santa having these attributes? Don't we eventually tell our children that Santa Claus does not exist? I reply: If you tell your children that Santa Claus is real, you are lying to them and that is clearly wrong. Secondly, if you teach your children about God and Santa, both having similar attributes, and then at some point you tell them that Santa is not actually real, you risk your children's confusion or conclusion that God is not real either! Remember, your children never saw Santa (only his "helpers") and they have never seen God. It may now be hard to convince them that God is real. God says that He will not allow His glory to be given to another (Isaiah 48:11), so we must not allow Santa to masquerade as God. 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 declares, "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." Our culture's imaginary Santa appears to be righteous, but is only a servant of Satan in disguise.

May our hearts be fully enraptured with worshiping our Savior, Jesus, every Christmas! Even Santa Claus as a distraction from the true meaning of Christmas is not harmless, but heartbreaking. The Christmas season is a time for true Christians to rejoice in the birth of their Savior, worship God for His marvelous works and wonderful character, spread the good news about Jesus, and give gifts to others as a token of love for them and as a symbol of God's giving love. Parents, your traditions dictate whether or not your children are thinking about Santa rather than Jesus. Many children dream about the gifts they will receive rather than what they can give to others. The song "Mister Santa" has children dreaming of Santa and presents:

Mister Santa bring us some toys
Bring Merry Christmas to all girls and boys
And every night we'll go to sleep singing
And dream about the presents you'll be bringing.

The song "Santa Claus for President" declares this:

Santa Claus for president
Elect him president today
Remember all his deeds
And you'll have reason to rejoice
He's what this country needs
And he's the little people's choice.

We are to remember God's deeds and rejoice in Him, not a make-believe supernatural being. Psalms 105:1-2 urges, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; speak of all His wonders."

Those who have a true knowledge of Jesus Christ can testify that it is certainly not Santa but Jesus who makes Christmas merry. The joy experienced by believers comes in knowing that God truly loves them and that they will spend eternity with God because of His free gift of grace.

In the song "Too fat for the Chimney" we ask the question, "Without Santa Claus, oh how can Christmas begin?" So who is the focal point of Christmas—Santa or Christ? Can Christmas begin at your house without Santa Claus?

As for me and my house, we will celebrate Christmas with Christ as the focal point, and with Santa rejected as a fraud and counterfeit.

Celebrate the Birth of Jesus with Your Family This Holy Season!

Do you desire to reject Santa Claus but feel your children will “miss out on all the fun”? You can share great merriment and joy with your whole family through many rich and life-giving Christmas activities:

- Visit nativity scenes and help toddlers identify the characters.
- Listen to and sing Christmas carols in front of a crackling fire or at the piano.
- Take turns reading the Christmas story from Luke and Matthew.
- Set up your own nativity in a prominent place in your home.
- Bake cookies for your neighbors and relatives. Include a card celebrating Jesus!
- Attend the musical “Handel’s Messiah” or another Christmas program.
- Attend a Christmas Eve service as a family.
- Collect money from each family member to give Jesus a present (a gift to support a needy person or ministry).

The Christmas tree does not need to distract from Jesus’ birth but rather can add more brightness and cheer to the occasion. You can decorate your tree to tell the Christmas story by using nativity characters, Christmons (ancient Christian symbols), or other Christian symbols. Top your tree with an angel representing one of the angels in the miraculous story or a star representing the Bethlehem star that shone over the lowly stable.

God gave us the gift of His Son; we follow this example by giving to others, not expecting anything in return. Your children can join in the shopping sprees, wrap and decorate gifts with the family and tag them to and from Jesus as well as members of the family. In remembrance of our Savior’s birth, some families bake a birthday cake each year. This Christmas, let’s give all the glory and attention to the newborn king!

References

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