

Remembering Christ

By David Phillips

Christ, as the Savior of the world, is a hard person to forget. Nevertheless, mankind seems quite capable of forgetting even the most important of things. Indeed, many people glorify Christ with their lips, but they forget all about Him when it comes to daily living. God, in His great wisdom, understands that we are very forgetful creatures and He knows that we need to be constantly reminded. Therefore, He gives us several ways to remember Christ and to remember all that He accomplished on this earth. It would be good for us to consider these points of reminder so that we may constantly turn our thoughts to Christ and so that we may remember Him wherever we go and in whatever situation we are in.

The Lord's Supper

The first reminder that we will consider is the Lord's Supper. On the night of His betrayal Jesus was keenly aware of the suffering that awaited Him. As He sat down at the Passover meal with His disciples He used that time to give them some instructions. Therefore, the scriptures say, *"When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'"* (Luke 22:14-21).

In this passage Jesus gave us a wonderful way to remember Him and His works. First we may know that Jesus, who is God, became flesh and dwelt among us in a human body (John 1:14). It is this body that we remember when we eat the bread, just as Jesus said, *"This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."* We remember that Jesus came in the flesh and we also remember that it was His body that was "given", that is to say that in the body He suffered and died on the cross. As Paul said in 1 Cor. 11:26, *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."*

Along with this we drink the fruit of the vine which Jesus said represents His blood. You see, it was His blood that was shed on the cross. Jesus came to establish the "new covenant." In that covenant He promised that He would forgive sins. But we learn in Hebrews 9 that without the shedding of blood there can be no covenant. Therefore, without the shedding of Jesus' blood there could be no forgiveness of sins. Just as important as His body is to our salvation, so is His blood. Therefore Jesus said, *"This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."* When we remember that Jesus shed His blood on the cross we remember that we who have come to Christ have had our sins sprinkled clean and washed away by His life-giving sacrifice. *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water"* (Heb. 10:22).

This reminder is helpful for us because we are called to live each moment of our lives as living sacrifices for God (Rom. 12:1). As we remember the Lord's sacrifice each first day of the week we

remember the kind of sacrifices we need to be making for our God and for our brethren, as it is written, *“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”* (1 John 3:16).

An observation that we must make from this very important principle is that if any of us choose not to assemble with the saints to partake of the Lord’s Supper, then we fail to remember Him as we ought to.

Preaching

With the Lord’s Supper each first day of the week, God gives us other reminders that provoke us and motivate us to live the way Jesus lived. In His discourse on the promised Holy Spirit Jesus revealed to the apostles that the “Helper” (the Holy Spirit) would *“bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”* (John 14:27). You see, even the apostles needed to be reminded of these things. Just as they were reminded by the Holy Spirit, so they constantly reminded all the brethren through their preaching and the writing of their epistles.

In 2 Pet. 1:10-15 Peter exhorts us to make our calling and election sure. He said in verse 12 that it was necessary for him to remind us of these things always. He then stated in verse 15, *“Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”*

In like manner, Paul said that he must remind the brethren of these things. *“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel...”* (2 Tim. 2:8). He also charged the next generation of preachers to fulfill this same purpose in their preaching as he wrote in 2 Tim. 2:14, *“Remind them of these things...”* and again in Tit. 3:1, *“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities...”*

Therefore, it is through the preaching of the inspired word of God that all of God’s people are constantly reminded of the life that Christ lived and our need to imitate Him in our own lives.

Here again, if we fail to assemble with the saints then they are brought to remembrance through the preaching of God’s word, then (1) we forsake God’s pattern and (2) we will begin to forget our Lord and Savior.

Studying

We should also realize that God has not left it to the preachers and teachers alone to bring to our remembrance things concerning Christ. There is also a certain amount of personal duty all of us must fulfill as we look to Christ in our own personal lives. John encourages us in his first letter to look to Christ. In 1 John 1:1-4 He said that the things concerning Christ were written down for us (vs. 4) so that our joy may be full. We understand that we learn of the things that were written when we assemble with the saints. But that consists of only two or three hours per week and there are 168 hours in a week. And if we miss a service or two then that amounts to only one hour per week. If we are to remember our Lord the way we ought to we must, without wavering, read and study the scriptures for ourselves throughout the week. We must be willing set aside some of our own personal time to devote to our Lord. For some this may require some sacrifice. But this sacrifice is a test of our love for God. Those who are not willing to make this sacrifice, to remember the Lord in this way, do not love God. By our works our hearts are made known. What about you? Do you take the time throughout the week to remember all that the Lord has done for you and all that He expects of you in return?

Here again, if we do not take the time to use this gift then (1) surely we do not love the Lord as we ought to, and (2) we will forget.

Beware

All of these things God has graciously given to us in order that we may keep Jesus Christ fresh in our minds and learn to walk as He walked. In so doing, God expects us to remember all that is recorded concerning Jesus: His miraculous birth, His faithfulness as a child, His willingness to resist temptation, His teachings and commands, His wisdom, His complete devotion to the Father, His sacrifices, His resurrection to everlasting life, and His Lordship. He gives us tools that bring these things to our remembrance on a daily basis. And as we keep these things fresh in our minds we may the more effectively resist the lies and deception that men in the world seek to spread concerning the life of Christ.

Concerning these falsehoods, we must be aware of those things which many people associate with “remembering Christ,” which in fact teach great error concerning the life, the person, and the mission of Christ.

Christmas

It is claimed that on the 25th of December Jesus Christ was born and that on that day certain shepherds and wise men from the east traveled to see Jesus in His manger. We hear stories and sing songs that speak of the baby Jesus bringing “peace on earth” and “good will toward men.” And so people claim to be remembering Christ every 25th of December. However, where some of the events that take place in the “Christmas story” can be found in the Bible, intermingled with the little bit of truth is a whole lot of error. If we are to remember Christ the way God intended we need to be able to sort out the truth from the error.

“Christ-mass”: The very name of this holiday is an indication of its origins. You see, Christmas was not started on the day Christ was born. Rather, it is a tradition that was started between 336 and 340 years after Christ was born. Which means none of the apostles, nor any of the Christians after them for several centuries celebrated this holiday. Contrary to popular belief, Christmas is not a purely Christian holiday. Rather, it consists of traditions gleaned from several different religious beliefs and cultural practices. Dec. 25th “was established in part, to compete with the pagan observance of ‘Saturnalia’ which took place on December 17th. Also, an agreement was reached between the Western Catholic, Eastern Rite and Orthodox churches which connected December 25th to January 6th (‘Epiphany’ - *the appearing of Jesus*), resulting in what is now known as ‘the twelve days of Christmas’” (Haile). Leaders of the Catholic Church in those days wanted to find a way to have the pagan converts celebrate Christ rather than their pagan gods. So they took their pagan traditions and combined them with various aspects of Christ’s birth.

The birth of Christ: Contrary to tradition, Christ was not born on Dec. 25th. In fact, He was not even born in the winter time. By comparing the biblical account with secular events surround the death of Herod (Matt. 2:19). We are able to conclude that Jesus was born closer to late summer or early fall than in the winter time. Also, though we do find the shepherds visiting the baby Jesus in His manger in Luke 2:8ff, we find that at between forty and eighty days had to have passed before the magi would have arrived on the scene. This is also seen by the fact that when the magi visited in Matt. 2:11, Jesus was no longer in a manger outside of an inn, but was in an actual house.

“Peace on earth”: Contrary to this very popular saying, Jesus said concerning Himself, “*Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division*” (Luke 12:51). You see, Jesus’ teachings were such that many people did not want to hear them. Therefore they create division between those who love the truth and those who do not. So long as there is sin in the world there will be no “peace on earth.” But some will say, “Is Jesus not called the ‘Prince of Peace?’” Yes, indeed, But not because He came to establish world peace. The Peace that Jesus

brought was not a physical peace to cover the whole world, but a spiritual peace between man and God. He died on the cross so that we might have our sins forgiven and be joined again to our God (Eph. 2:17).

If we celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday we are condoning all of these errors that are taught by false churches. Therefore it is important that we understand these things, that we reject the errors surrounding the Christmas tradition and that cling to the truth.

Keeping Days

Since Christmas is based on false doctrines, is it a sin to observe it? God shows us that whether an individual keeps a day or not is entirely up to him/her. We are told in Rom 14:5-6, *“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it.”*

What we learn from this passage is that if an individual desires to keep a day then that is up to him/her. God is not concerned with the keeping of days, but with knowledge of the truth, and our faith and obedience in that truth. A person who knows the truth may gather with his family just as much on Dec. 25th as on June 25th. It makes no difference. But we must understand that God does not reserve a yearly holiday for us to remember Christ. He expects that we remember our Lord and Savior every day of the year. The only specific day that we are to concern ourselves with is the first day of the week on which we are to take the Lord’s Supper.

Let us therefore acknowledge the truth concerning Christ. Let us reject the error that is spread by those who observe Christmas as a religious holiday. And let us remember Christ in the way that God has commanded in His holy scriptures.