

WE WOULD SEE JESUS
From John 12:21 "We Would See Jesus" December 6, 1987 a.m.
ROME GEORGIA
December 21, 2014

From the newspaper column of Gerald Kloss 30 YEARS AGO in the Milwaukee Journal:

"Dear Sir:

Where can I buy **aluminum Christmas tree needles** to spread on the carpet under my aluminum Christmas tree? I want it to look natural, as if they had fallen off the tree in the old fashioned way. - **Signed SENTIMENTAL**"

"Dear Sentimental:

They aren't available right now, but a satisfactory substitute is to buy a few boughs of natural evergreen, allow the needles to dry and fall off and then spray them with aluminum paint. **They look like the real thing!**" TAN #2729

The streets were filled with holiday traffic. It seemed as though the shopping areas would burst under the throng of anxious buyers. Friends and relatives hailed one another as they hurriedly went about shopping for the necessary food items and adornments of the season at hand.

People who scarcely gave religion a thought at other times of the year were now feverishly about the business of seeing to it that their homes were adorned in the prescribed manner so that all those around would know that they were participants in this most religious and holy of all celebrations.

Stories were told about the events that had transpired in bygone days and children hung on every word, anxiously awaiting their part in these special days. A sense of peace and well being permeated each household and there was assurance in the heart of each one that surely God was pleased with all this activity to CELEBRATE THE **SACRIFICIAL LAMB THAT HAD DELIVERED THE NATION OF ISRAEL FROM THE BONDAGE OF EGYPT SOME 2000 YEARS EARLIER!**

IT WAS THE PASSOVER FEAST THAT WAS BEING OBSERVED AND NO JEW WOULD THINK OF FAILING TO TAKE PART IN ALL ITS PAGEANTRY. ALL PARTICIPATED IN THE FESTAL OCCASION, BUT FEW UNDERSTOOD IT'S SIGNIFICANCE. THEY ALL KNEW THE STORIES ABOUT THE SEASON, BUT FEW UNDERSTOOD THE PURPOSE OR THE REASON.

Never-the-less, everyone took part in the festivities. At such an occasion as this, all the Jews within 15 miles of Jerusalem converged on the city as well as Jews from far away provinces. It must have been quite a spectacle for the **uninitiated gentiles** to behold.

John 12:20 tells us that **among this holiday crowd were certain Greeks who had come to the festival. They sought out Philip, who though he was a Jew, had a Greek name.** And there amid the push and shove of this great convocation of seemingly religious Jews, they sought out the one Jew who they desired to see.

20. And there were **certain Greeks** among them that came up to worship at the feast:

21. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, **SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS.**

22. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

23. And Jesus answered them, saying, **The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.**

“SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS. “

Imagine with me for a moment some **visitors here in Rome Georgia.** They come from a land that knows little of our Precious Savior.

Yet, they have heard rumors about a man called Jesus. A man who in his short life changed the history of the world. A man who has the power to conquer the death and despair that enshrouds the globe today.

And so, learning what they can in their own land, **they discover that the most important day of the Christian calendar is the day that we call Christmas,** and that this day is preceded by a season of unparalleled rejoicing in the land of America. And so, they make their plans to travel to our land to discover firsthand what they can learn about Jesus during our most holy weeks.

At first, they walk about our streets in awe of the feverish activity that surrounds them. Everywhere people scurry about gathering gifts as if they were squirrels gathering acorns for the winter ahead.

What a marvelous thing, they think, that all the citizens are buying gifts to celebrate the birth of this man called Jesus. **Surely there must be a gala celebration where these expensive items will be laid at the feet of this marvelous man called Jesus.**

Foods are being purchased for special feasts, families are drawing together for special celebrations, music tells the story again and again of the blessed birth of the Savior of men.

AND EVERYWHERE ARE THE MANY PICTURES OF THE RED CLAD JOLLY JESUS SMILING AND WAIVING TO THE RELIGIOUS MASSES.

FUNNY, ONE OF THE VISITORS THINKS TO HIMSELF, I NEVER KNEW DONKEYS HAD ANTLERS.

In a moment of unprecedented good cheer you flash a smile at this particular bewildered visitor.

You are so overcome by the Christmas spirit that you actually stop your shopping for a moment and ask this visitor to our land if there is some way that you can help him.

He looks at you for a moment and then quickly looks up some words in a phrase-dictionary that he bought from Mr. Berlitz and with eyes full of hope boldly says to you

“SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS. “

Why, what a strange request from a visitor from another land. **“WHY ON EARTH WOULD ANYONE BE IN ROME GEORGIA, AT Mt. BERRY MALL, IN THE MIDST OF THE CHRISTMAS RUSH, LOOKING FOR JESUS?!”**

In your surprise and to your chagrin you find yourself asking that very question of the visitor.

In labored English he explains that **he knows little of this man called Jesus.**

He has heard that he **came some 2,000 years ago, but yet that he was still alive to this very day.** He tells you that he has come from a distant land to **find Jesus** and since he knows that **Christmas** is the **celebration of the birth of Jesus**, he has come to learn all he can about this man. He is fascinated by the activity and **wants you to explain the significance of those things that he sees.**

For instance:

- Where will this great birthday party be held and how will all these people be able to lay their gifts at his feet
- and is there religious significance to the wrapping paper.
- what of the tree and the LIGHTS?

AS YOU STAMMER AROUND WITH YOUR PALTRY ANSWERS THE VISITOR PERCEIVES THAT HE HAS PERHAPS ASKED THE WRONG PERSON. NOT WISHING TO CAUSE YOU ANY FURTHER EMBARRASSMENT HE ASKS BUT ONE MORE FAVOR.

“WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO SHOW HIM IN THE CHRISTIAN’S HOLY BOOK WHERE THE INSTRUCTIONS ARE REGARDING THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS?”

You are both **relieved and dismayed that you have a Bible in your car.** Now you must find the Christmas story to share with this visitor. Surely it must be near the front of the New Testament.

Here it is in **Matthew**, and again in **Luke**. But that seems to be the sum of it.

Even in these accounts there seems little resemblance to our 20th century perception of the birth scene and the way it really was.

Two dirt poor pilgrims, peasants from Galilee, unable to secure lodging, finding shelter in a stinking barn, giving birth to their child on a filthy stable floor. Laying their tiny son in an animals feeding trough to prevent him being trampled by the animals wrapping him in rags to protect him in the chill of the unheated surroundings, no glamour. No mystique. No halos or little drummer boys or kings of oriental descent.

Just Joseph and Mary and Jesus - and later on a few poor shepherds who stopped by and left.

Minutes drag on like hours as you stammer about trying to explain why the greatest holy day of Christendom has so little resemblance to the scant details of scripture.

You search in vain to find where the **apostles** ever celebrated the birth of the Savior or even a passage **where Jesus himself had set this season apart as a time of celebration** and in dismay you must at last confess to your new friend that **there is little in the gospels to commend the activities of this season.**

Perhaps the epistles will aid in your quest for the truth about Christmas - but again you find that there is very little said about the birth of Jesus.

AS IMPORTANT AS IT IS THAT WE REALIZE THAT JESUS WAS BORN AS A MAN, EVEN IF WE REALIZE THAT THE VERY INCARNATION IS IN VIEW, **WE MUST NEVER LOOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT IT WAS THE DEATH OF JESUS AND NOT HIS BIRTH THAT IS THE GREATEST CAUSE OF ANY REJOICING THAT WE MAY DO AS CHRISTIANS.**

THE CENTER OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IS NOT THE BIRTH OF JESUS BUT HIS DEATH!

We Were Never Enjoined To Observe The Birthday Of Jesus, But Christ Himself Gave Us The **Bread And The Wine** With The **Command - "THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."**

THE ORDINANCE OF **BAPTISM WHICH WE ARE ENJOINED TO OBEY IS LIKEWISE A REMINDER OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION ON OUR BEHALF.**

Suddenly you realize the futility of trying to find Jesus in all our Christmas practices. You realize that the true story of the **significance of Christ's birth** is **not found in the pages of the N.T. at all but rather in the O.T. in the giving of the Passover Lamb for the redemption of God's people.**

You remember that when the Gentiles came to the apostles with their simple request,

“SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS. . . “

THAT the response of Christ Himself was not to point them to his birth, but rather to the fact that it is through death of the grain seed that the harvest is reaped and that likewise he too must die in order to draw all men unto himself. JN. 12:32

23. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

31. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

They sought out **Philip** – Phillip was (c. Acts 6:5), was a **Hellenistic, or Grecian Jew. One who had lived outside of Jerusalem**, but nevertheless followed the customs and religion of the Jews. This is no doubt why the Greeks sought out Philip. 12/08/02)

People tend to seek out those whom they can identify with in their quest for Christ. i.e. “Cowboy Churches”

The request to “see” Jesus was not a casual request to catch a glimpse at a superstar.

SEE = *Eidon* which is aorist form of *horad* which is “seeing with perception. a grasping of significance of that thing beheld.”

And Philip told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together told Jesus, and when the men were brought to the Messiah

Charles Colson makes this statement in his book “***Kingdoms in Conflict***” p. 85

“A BORROWED MANGER AND A BORROWED TOMB FRAMED HIS EARTHLY LIFE”

Just inside the framework we see these **Gentiles who came seeking after the Christ.**

The MAGI, just after the manger - and these Greeks - just before the tomb.

And just as the manger was empty when the Magi found the Christ child, so to was the grave soon to be empty!

Christian, LOG CABIN 35 years earlier. Returned to homestead. Remembered that he had planted walnuts along a creek bank. Going, he found there a stately

row of trees. He remembered too that he had hid some walnuts in the attic. Climbing the steps, he likewise found these walnuts - shriveled and dusty.

RESUME STORY TELLING

AND SO YOU NOW LIKEWISE TURN TO THIS SEEKER OF JESUS IN THE MIDST OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON AND YOU POINT HIM - - NOT TO THE BABY IN THE CATTLE TROUGH - -BUT TO THE RISEN SAVIOR OF MANKIND WHO CAME AND NOT ONLY LAID DOWN HIS LIFE - - BUT TOOK IT UP AGAIN AND WHO EVEN TO THIS DAY OFFERS THAT ETERNAL LIFE OF HIS TO WHOSOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD.

PERHAPS A GOOD SUMMARY OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY IS FOUND IN
I TIM. 1:15

“THIS IS A FAITHFUL SAYING AND WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTANCE, THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS, OF WHOM I AM CHIEF.”

Rom. 5:6 and 10

Romans 5:6 **For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.**

Romans 5:10 **For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.**

RECONCILIATION through the payment of death on the cross, the payment for our sins. **LIFE** through the resurrected Life of our Savior.

OUR JOY IS NOT PRIMARILY THROUGH HIS BIRTH, BUT THROUGH HIS RECONCILING DEATH!

Matt. 1:21

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save HIS PEOPLE from their sins.”

Luke 2:8-11 10 ALL PEOPLE.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you **good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.**

11 **For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.**

Acts 2:39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [even] as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Romans 10:13

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

And - should someone be so bold as to ask you this season - **SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS -**

REMEMBER ALSO THE WORDS OF **Romans 10:14**

**“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?
and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?
and how shall they hear without a preacher? “**

IN 1247 A HOSPITAL WAS FOUNDED IN ENGLAND CALLED ST. MARY OF BETHLEHEM.

TWO CENTURIES LATER IT WAS CONVERTED INTO A HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE. IN THOSE DAYS WHEN THE FEEBLE-MINDED WERE CHAINED AND ABUSED, THAT INSTITUTION BECAME KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY FOR ITS NOISE AND CONFUSION.

THE ORIGINAL NAME OF BETHLEHEM WAS GRADUALLY SHORTENED TO BEDLAM, A WORD THAT HAS COME INTO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS MEANING A PLACE OF WILD UPROAR AND CONFUSION. IT IS ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE THAT PEOPLE COULD TAKE SUCH A GLORIOUS, BEAUTIFUL AND PEACEFUL NAME LIKE BETHLEHEM AND MAKE OUT OF IT A WORD THAT MEANS CONFUSION AND DISORDER. TAN #2731

We must ask ourselves this season, dose our celebration come closer to the confusion of BEDLAM than it is to the reality of BETHLEHEM.

God has established the church to be an eternal beacon of the GRACE OF GOD. To the angles and to all of mankind. Eph. 2:7 and 3:10. That beacon shines as we come to the full appreciation of those events of the birthday of our Savior, that focus in the NT was not on the Baby – but on God.