

Are You Ready for **SANTA?**



by Shannon Dukes & Frank Zitzman

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“Santa Claus is Coming to Town!”



We hear this all around us during the Christmas season. Kids are often asked, “Are you ready for Santa?” or “Have you been good enough for Santa to come to your house?”

Even as adults, we can get excited about spending time with family, exchanging gifts, and sharing a nice dinner.

Though these activities can be enjoyable, they can also be a distraction from the true meaning of Christmas. We often overlook or “push to the back burner” the real reason for celebrating this time of year. After all, the only reason we have Christmas is because Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, out of His amazing grace and love, humbled Himself to step into human history in the person of Jesus Christ.

Was there a real “Jolly Old St. Nicholas”??



What some people may not realize is that Santa is based on a real man, Nikolaos of Myra, who lived in what is now modern-day Turkey between 270 AD and 343 AD.

While the real Nikolaos was a God-fearing man and did do good things for others, these noble roots do not entitle “Santa” to the level of attention he receives today. In fact, the real Nikolaos would probably be appalled at the Santa-idol that has been created in his name.

Sadly, many parents (probably without even realizing it) are instilling in their children a worship-like devotion to Santa. They will stand in line for however long it takes so that their child can sit on ol’ Santa’s lap. They are willing to endure even the harshest of weather so that their children can get a glimpse of the jolly fat man as he passes by in a Christmas parade. What if those children were taught to revere Jesus like they are taught to revere Santa?

(See “A Young Mother’s Dear Santa Letter” in the appendix)

“Joy to the World” ... but why?

Christmas should be the time we celebrate one of the greatest events in human history – when God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ.



But what significance does that have, and why did Jesus come anyway? Was it so that we could have

a nice nativity scene this time of year? To give us an opportunity to spend time with family and friends? To make our semi-annual trip to church?

No, Jesus did not come for any of these reasons, nor did He come to simply be a cute baby in a manger under our Christmas tree or on a shelf. His purpose in coming was to pay the penalty for our sin by dying a brutal death on the cross (Philippians 2:6-11). Through His death and resurrection, Jesus provides the solution to man's greatest problem, which is sin, and eliminates man's greatest fear, which is death. But Satan knows a "baby Jesus" that fits under our tree is much more manageable and far less life-changing. The last thing Satan wants is for us to be set free by following the Crucified and Risen Savior and submitting our lives to Him.

Are You Naughty or Nice?



We tell children today that if they are good enough, Santa will bring them presents. What a blatant distortion and total reversal of the true Christmas message!! God gave us the most precious gift of all time not because we were good, but be-

cause we were bad – *very* bad. Jesus’ birth took place so we could be rescued from our badness (sin), not rewarded for our supposed goodness.

Basically, the “gifts” that Santa brings must be earned by good works or behavior, but the gift of eternal life that Jesus gives is *in spite of* our ability to perform good works or behavior. You see, we cannot be “good enough” to earn our way to heaven. That would require perfection, and any honest person knows that this is not possible. Just compare yourself to God’s standard, the Ten Commandments.



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If you have told even one lie, you are a liar. Jesus said that if you look with lust, you are an adulterer at heart. If other things in your life are more important than God (Santa? Maybe your children’s happiness?), then the Bible says you are an

idolater. 1 John 3:4 says that sin is the breaking of God’s law. Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death. Revelation 21:8 says that murderers, the sexually immoral, idolaters, and **all liars** will have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second death.

Jesus Provides THE Perfect Gift



The truth is, all of us are in deep trouble when it comes to the perfection category. Psalm 130:3 asks the rhetorical question, “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?” (NIV84) In other words, if God kept a list of our sins, who would be innocent? The obvious answer is NO ONE. However, the next verse of Psalm 130 gives us some very GOOD NEWS – “But there is forgiveness with you...”.

Though our universal sin problem paints a very dark and dismal picture, that darkness is shattered by the light that comes with the TRUE Christmas message!!! Mankind is hopelessly under the dominion and condemnation of sin’s penalty, but the light of forgiveness came to Earth when Jesus was born. This is the ULTIMATE gift!!

What a contrast between the fabricated Christmas story that we often hear today and the TRUE message! While Santa supposedly sacrifices his time to give people what they want, Jesus sacrificed His life to give people what they need more than anything else. While Santa supposedly gives material gifts that will eventually decay, Jesus offers

the spiritual gift of eternal life that lasts forever.

This, then, is why Jesus came: to pay the penalty that no one else ever could! Jesus Christ ALONE paid the penalty for sin (which is death) and He ALONE conquered the penalty of sin when He rose from the dead. ONLY God in the flesh could accomplish such an amazing victory, and that is exactly who Jesus is. This is why Jesus could boldly proclaim in John 14:6 – “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Because of His great victory, Jesus now offers to us the free gift of salvation! To receive that gift, we need to abandon our trust in ourselves and put our wholehearted confidence and trust in the person of Jesus Christ. Such a transfer of trust requires that we humbly confess and repent of our sins, and put our faith in Christ ALONE as our Savior and LORD.

The Greek word for repent, “metanoēō,” literally means a change of mind. When we repent of our sin, that means we change our mind (i.e., the way we think) about sin. When that change takes place, we see sin differently, we see self differently, we see God differently – all of which results in a dramatic outward change in our behavior and the direction of our lives.

Just to be clear, “turning from sin” does not mean

that we become *sinless*, but it does mean that we earnestly desire to “*sin less*”. We completely surrender our life to God to the point where our sincere goal in life changes from wanting to please ourselves to wanting to please God. Though we can never totally stop sinning in this life, a true Christ-follower will not live a life characterized by sin.

Please understand that putting our faith in Jesus cannot just be added to a list of good deeds that we think will make us acceptable to God. If that is the case, then Jesus becomes simply one of the many hopes of our salvation. No, Jesus must become our ONLY hope of salvation. In His redeeming work ALONE is where our confidence must be.

“He Knows if You’ve Been Bad or Good...”



To be sure that your confidence is in Christ ALONE, I encourage you to take the following quick test. The test involves a hypothetical situation where you are asked to answer a simple question with the very first thought that comes into your mind.

Note that you must be honest about your very first thought. It’s the only way for the test to be effective.

Here's the test: Imagine that you died today and stood before God and He asked you, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" What would you say??

What was your first thought? Did you immediately think of all the good and bad things that you have done (your works)? Did you automatically start making a list in your mind? If you did, then I would seriously suggest that you re-evaluate where your trust really lies. Is your confidence truly in Jesus Christ, or is it actually in your own behavior and good works?

You see, on the day of judgment, the issue will not be what you did with your good works. The issue will be what you did with Jesus. ONLY Jesus lived the perfect life that is acceptable to God. Only HE could make this incredibly bold statement at the end of John 8:29, "I always do those things that please Him [God]." Yes, ONLY Jesus can be our perfect substitute because ONLY Jesus lived a life totally without sin.

So, I encourage you again. Be brutally honest with yourself about the very first thought that comes into your mind as you ponder God's question, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" If your answer does not involve what you have done with Jesus, and only contains a list of your futile attempts at being a good person, then you are in serious trouble.

Something worse than coal in your stocking



The Bible warns of a scenario on the day of judgment that involves people who were trusting in their own good works. In Matthew 7:22, Jesus said, “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’”

Here is a group of people that did some amazing things, but tragically, their misplaced trust in those things had the most severe consequences. For in the next verse Jesus went on to say, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness [sin]!”

The four most horrible words that a person could hear from the lips of Jesus – “I NEVER KNEW YOU!!!” And don’t forget, these are people who assumed they were going to be accepted because of their good deeds. However, because of their misplaced trust, they, like everyone else who has misplaced their trust, are headed for an eternity in hell.

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!”



Every year we say that Santa is going to come, *and he never does*. But one day, Jesus **IS** going to come, and this time He will not be offering salvation. On that day, He will be coming as the King of Kings, bringing judgment. So regardless of whether you are “ready for Santa” or not, the more important question is, “Are you ready for Jesus to come again?”

(See the lyrics for “Jesus Christ is Coming Again” in the appendix.)

The Bible says we should examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). How about you? Do you have a personal relationship with Christ? Do you really know Jesus, and does He really know you? Are you trusting in Christ **ALONE**, or are you like those in Matthew 7:22 who were trusting in their good works?

Does your life show the fruit of someone who follows Him (Galatians 5:22)? Or for you does being a Christian mean occasionally attending church or practicing “random acts of kindness”? I urge you this Christmas

season to examine yourself to see where you stand with God. How you live your life shows what you really believe ... everything else is just religious talk.

As we get busy with the Christmas season, take time to think about the TRUE reason for the season - the birth of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, our ONLY hope of eternal salvation. May the blessing of God be upon you as you remember and celebrate His glorious coming and His imminent return!!!

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Have a VERY MERRY “CHRIST-CENTERED” CHRISTMAS!

Appendix

A Young Mother’s Letter to Santa

Dear Santa Claus,

You’ll probably be surprised to receive this letter from an adult. You may be even more surprised as you read it to find that the writer is neither a maiden aunt nor a disgruntled bachelor. I’m a young mother.

It isn’t my intention, Santa, to hurt your feelings.

You see, my family has paid tribute to you for many past Christmases: my husband and I when we were in our childhood and now our children who are 6, 4, and 2. They still care for you. How much they care has really proved a problem in recent years. It is threatening to happen again.

Our children worship you. They speak of you constantly. They watch diligently for your December 25 appearance. Can you tell us, Santa, what you have done to deserve this faithfulness from two generations? Can you promise any future consideration in exchange for past loyalties???

During a family crisis, have you ever told us, "Lo, I am with you always?" Were you ever with us during sorrow to comfort us with these words: "But your sorrow will be turned into joy?" And Santa, there have been doubtful times. Where were you? We didn't hear from you the calming message, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

We have come to the conclusion that you have been even less than a friend should be, and we have been short changed. My three children have stood on a windy, cold main street just to get a glimpse of your jolly face. They have written heartfelt yearly letters. They have gone to department stores just to whisper

in your ear. They have worked hard at being good in anticipation of your Christmas Eve visit. Yes, they've done all this – as their father and I did before them.

But there's going to be a change this Christmas. There isn't going to be any Santa Claus worship in our home. We've decided to focus our attention and adoration on another BEING – ONE who has stood by us the other 364 days this past year; ONE who comforted us during the sorrowful and doubtful times – and yes, the times of crisis also.

It's true that your name will probably be mentioned around our house, Santa. Old habits are hard to break abruptly. But SOMEONE else's name will be mentioned much more often. The children will probably work just as hard at being good, but I hope they will do it for another inducement – one that will last the whole year long – to bring glory to ANOTHER's name. The other ONE has given us so much more – and not just on Christmas Eve.

You may call our family fickle, Santa, but we won't mind. On this December 25th, and all through the year, we want a COMFORTER, a HEALER, a strengthening KING. We don't want a myth any longer.

We've talked it over. This year we've decided to give tribute, honor, and worship to SOME-

ONE who really deserves them – to the TRUE GIVER – our God and Saviour, JESUS CHRIST.

Farewell,

A YOUNG MOTHER

(Original author unknown)

JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN

(sung to the tune of “Santa Claus is Coming to Town)

Chorus:

*Oh, you better watch out,
Better deal with your sin
'Cause Jesus Christ, He's coming again
Jesus Christ is coming again.*

He sees you when you're sinning
He knows if you're a fake
He knows that you're more bad than good
So repent, for goodness' sake!

Chorus

He's made a list of the naughty and nice
And there is no need to check it twice
For they both may have a story to tell
But without Jesus Christ, their destiny is hell.

Chorus

Is your name in the book of life?
Have you been cleansed of your sin and strife?
Has your scarlet sin been made as white as snow?
Or would you tragically answer, "I don't know"?

Chorus

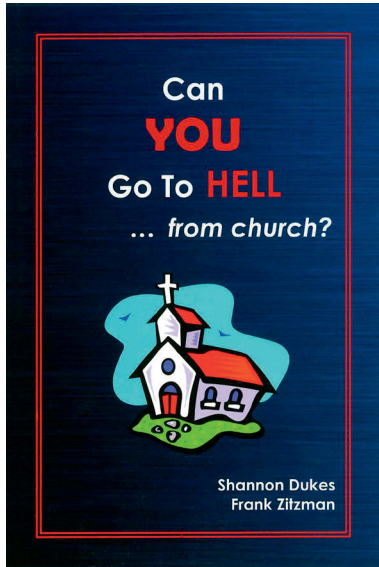
He'll judge you when He gets here
He'll hold you to His law
He'll find that you have fallen short
So repent and make Him Lord of ALLL-L-L

Chorus

Your time is running out
You need to clear all your doubt
So bow your knee to the King of Kings
And find the PEACE that Jesus brings

Oh, you better bow now
You better not wait,
You better trust Christ
Before it's too late,
'Cause Jesus Christ is coming again.
So be sure that you have dealt with your sin!!!!

- Frank Zitzman



You can contact us with questions or for additional copies of this tract, or for copies of our other tract, "Can You Go to Hell From Church?", at areyoureadyforsanta@gmail.com

“Are You Ready for Santa?” is a question we hear everywhere around us at Christmas time. Children are being prompted to be on their best behavior in hopes that Santa will bring them gifts. Christmas trees and lights are going up all over town. Christmas songs are playing in stores and on the radio. Preparations are being made to visit family and people are frantically running from store to store looking for that last minute gift.

Could it be that all this Santa-focus and these traditional activities are distracting us from the real meaning behind this sacred holiday? This booklet answers that question and issues a challenge to return to the true meaning of Christmas.

