

For God So Loved

"Tis the season to be jolly!"

These words have echoed through the years as the standard for Christmas, when we indulge to the excess and acquire things that we perhaps could not have all year round or receive gifts that our heart yearns for.

This week however, for many is not a season to be jolly! Not by the world's standards at least, because throughout the world there are those in danger of their very lives through conflict, parents watching their babies slowly die from malnutrition, those on the verge of suicide or those who have lost their loved-ones.

On the other hand, there are those whose season will be jolly to the excess. Those who have too much to eat, who live in safety and who are surrounded by family and friends having a great time, sparing not a thought for those less fortunate.

I am in rather a meditative frame at this time because unfortunately, one of our acquaintances died prematurely from a heart attack at the age of 45. He left behind a wife, children, family members and friends for whom Christmas will perhaps never be the same again. Here is a young man, in the prime of life with so much potential, with dreams and plans and desires not only for himself but for his family. In one brief moment when his spirit left his body all that was gone forever!

However, my greatest concern is where is his soul now? Where is his "Christmas" being spent as he continues in his eternal walk? I say 'continues' because we are eternal beings, the thing is that we have the power to decide where it will be spent after we leave the earth realm. That decision is made between the time we are born to the second we die. How we live this life is vital! What we decide in this life has eternal implications!

Habbakuk 2:18-20(The Message) says *"What's the use of a carved god so skillfully carved by its sculptor?*

What good is a fancy cast god when all it tells is lies? What sense does it make to be a pious god-maker

who makes gods that can't even talk? Who do you think you are— saying to a stick of wood, 'Wake up,'

Or to a dumb stone, 'Get up'? Can they teach you anything about anything? There's nothing to them but surface. There's nothing on the inside. 20"But oh! God is in his holy Temple! Quiet everyone—a holy

silence. Listen!"

Men have built their idols! Careers, family, self-centeredness, material possessions have all become idols. Idolatry abounds at Christmas. Commercialism has overshadowed the true meaning of Christmas. John 1:1-3 and John 3:15-16 tells us that God, the creator of the universe loves mankind so much that he gave us Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at this time not to condemn us but to save us from an eternity spent apart from Him. Those who believe will not spend eternity in hell but will have eternal life with God. All we have to do is to realize that we need Jesus to take over, make Him Lord and invite Him into our hearts.

Then make a 180 degree change in course. With His help, make what He wants priority. Salvation is more than just evading hell. It is having peace and joy and fulfillment in every area of our lives here on earth,(Matthew 6:33) and reward in an eternity spent with Jesus!

Yes, God is love and he loves all mankind. Love came down at Christmas in the form of a baby in Bethlehem. That baby grew up, that baby when He became a man died for you and me. He resurrected that we might live forever with him because through Him we are justified, sanctified and made new creatures in the eyes of God the Father!

That baby will return as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah with fire in His eyes and a sword in His hand. He will judge the world, He will be our Supreme ruler here on earth for eternity - an eternity of peace and joy and all we could ever imagine and long for!

My heart-cry for you and the world this Christmas is that you receive this great gift that the God-man brought - eternal life. Will you receive it?

If you have already accepted Him, make a new commitment. Who or what is there in your life that has become an idol? What has made you distance yourself from Him? He is reaching out still, He is loving you still. Come to Him!

Matthew 6:30-33 (The Message) *"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.*