

Christmas, a promise of things to come

Text: Romans 1:2-3



Hi everybody,

You might not know this but I have not always believed in the promise of Christmas. For many years we never celebrated a proper Christmas in our home due to the family and social problems we experienced growing up in South Africa. As children we never really knew if the Christmas season would turn out good or bad. For most parts it turned out bad because people tended to drink more alcohol than usual during this time and end up fighting and swearing each other. However, I have to admit that there is certainly something very special, wonderful, even magical at this time of year. While it has taken me nearly 20 years to come to this point in my life, I think I am finally getting it. I am so grateful to my wife and children for their patience and support in helping me to appreciate the good things Christmas brings.

The truth is with Christmas we have a sense of wonder, beauty, and even anticipation. We look forward to being with those closest to us, family and friends, and eating incredible food (at least if you live in Scandinavia with all of its Christmas traditions). It is a wonderful time of the year. It is also a time that is marked, for the most part, by an absence of self-centeredness and nastiness (I wish people would be like this all year round). In fact it would appear that most people are even willing to demonstrate a measure of kindness toward one another, even strangers.

But here is the question: Does Christmas really live up to all its promises? Well, it does sometimes – at least to some extent. But if we are really honest we will need to admit that Christmas doesn't really deliver. In fact, what it does deliver for many people is a lot of financial difficulty and a lot of stress. If you are a man (Ladies, I am looking at Christmas from my point of view now), your blood pressure will go up dramatically at this time of the year. I would like to suggest that last minute Christmas shopping can actually be very hazardous to a man's health due to its elevating effects on his blood pressure. On the other hand I believe women have a built in safety device that somehow leaves their blood pressure more or less unaffected by the Christmas shopping ritual. I have come to believe that they actually get energized and feel good shopping!

So what is Christmas at its worst? At its worst Christmas is a very stressful, commercial, empty, exhausting and very expensive event that seems to drag on for weeks (even months) at a time. And what is Christmas at its best you may be asking? At its best true Christmas celebration is a glimpse of something wonderful that is coming: the beauty, the love, the warmth, the community, the promise and the hope of something much better. Because when you get down to it, Christmas according to the Bible, is a promise – a promise of things to come.



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