

THAT CHRISTMAS AND THIS CHRISTMAS

Luke 2:1-18 Matthew 2:16

Introduction: The Christmas when Jesus was born, around A.D. 1 and our Christmas some 2,000 years later, how different. There will be hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on Christmas presents and hundreds of people will die in traffic accidents on their way to visit someone during the Christmas holidays. How different Christmas is today from the very first Christmas, yet there is very much still the same.

I. WHAT WAS THE UNIVERSE DOING IN A.D. 1?

1. The sun was rising and setting. The moon was waxing and waning. The planets were turning in their courses. The stars were shining, visible by night, invisible by day. The waters were running toward the sea. The trees were blossoming and bearing fruit, each after it's own kind. The wild animals were gathering at night by the water pools. The creature called man was spreading upon the face of the earth.
2. What is the universe doing today? The SAME thing.

II. WHAT WAS THE NATION DOING IN A.D. 1?

1. What was Caesar, the "August, the Sublime, the Royal, the Regal" doing in Rome? What was Herod, who appropriated the title of "Great" doing in Jerusalem?
2. *Luke* gives the answer. Caesar was taxing the people. Death and taxes are known to be inevitables. What difference did it make if a young carpenter named Joseph had to go without a new tool? What difference did it make if Mary had to put off buying the needed garment for her expected baby? What difference if they had to make the long journey to Bethlehem, with Mary expecting her baby at any moment. What difference, taxes had to be paid, Caesar's roads, armies, palaces, and courts must be supported. (Nothing but crumbling and half-buried ruins remain today.)
3. What was Herod "the Great" doing? He was engaged in killing. The guilty and most of all, the innocent. The title "great" is a bit ironic, because Herod belongs to the group which includes Nero, Tamarlane, Hitler and Mussolini. What was the nation doing? Taxing and killing and waring.
4. What can be observed about our own nation today? The nation is taxing, using the taxes partially to support war efforts around the world and to support the government and all it's programs.

III. WHAT WERE THE PEOPLE DOING IN A.D. 1?

1. Their money was going into Caesar's coffers. Their sons were going into Caesar's armies.
2. *Luke* tells us that there were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over the flocks by night.

3. The shepherds were tending their flocks, the farmers were tilling their fields, the carpenters, like Joseph, were building houses, making furniture, merchants were buying and selling grain, clothing, rugs, jewelry, the people, the great masses of people were working.
4. Some of the people were worshipping. Some were worshipping Jehovah, some were worshipping Diana. Augustus Caesar was demanding that the people worship him. Others were worshipping the sun and various idols.
5. What were the people doing on that first Christmas? Paying taxes, working and worshipping.
6. What are people doing today? Paying taxes, working and worshipping. The Jews still worship Jehovah. Multitudes still worship the goddess of pleasure and lust. Many still worship the planets via horoscopes. There are some who worship their leaders and there are those who are bowing down to their man made images.
7. But today, there is something new. Thousands worship the baby that was born on that first Christmas. This Christmas He is the joy of the world, the Hope of the world. The people that once walked in darkness have seen a great light.

IV. WHAT WAS GOD DOING IN A.D. 1?

1. God was sustaining the universe and since that first Christmas, the sun has risen hundreds of thousands of times and it has never failed to rise. The moon has reflected its loveliness upon the earth thousands of times. There have been a few thousand spring times with flowers and as many summers and winters. The waters are still flowing toward the seas and all is still in order. God is sustaining the universe now as He did then.
2. What was God doing? God was overruling the nations, causing His divine will to be worked as He desired. In the face of nations, kings, parliaments, presidents, governments, God does what He pleases to do. So much of what God does goes unnoticed by us.
3. In A.D. 1, God ignored Augustus Caesar and Herod the Great. God ignored the great city of Jerusalem. He ignored the glittering palaces. God's Son was born in a small village, in a smelly stable, without all the glamour and glitter.
4. What is God doing in the face of what the people are doing?
 - He is fathering His people.
 - He is doing this by sustaining the universe.
 - He is doing this by overruling the nations.
 - He is doing this through the wonderful birth of His Son.
 - He is keeping His promise. He has given the people a Savior. He has revealed Himself to mankind. He is daily giving eternal life to those who seek it.
5. What was God doing on that first day of Christmas? What He's doing today. Sustaining the universe, overruling the nations, fathering His Children. God is doing exactly today exactly what He was doing on that first Christmas.

6. What should we be doing this Christmas?
 - We should be exercising faith in God's Son, Jesus.
 - We should be putting our hope in Jesus.
 - We should be responding to God's great love by in turn loving each other.

CONCLUSION:

1. This Christmas, let us increase our faith in God, remembering that the name "GOD" was present in the year A.D. 1 as it is present today.
2. Let us remember that we have eternal life because of that first Christmas.
3. God does not change. He is the same today as He was that first Christmas. Aren't you glad?