

# Have Yourself a Merry *Christian* Christmas

## Isaiah 9:6-7

**Introduction** – While Christmas remains a popular holiday, the vestiges of anything Christian about it are more and more being ripped away by an unbelieving culture tired of having to view a manger scene and admit they don't know what it means. Should we fight back to make it a *Christian* holiday?

**The Brief History of Christ Mass** – December 25<sup>th</sup> was probably established as a holiday corresponding to the festival in honor of the sun god of the imperial divinity. This was done by the Emperor Aurelian around 270 AD. Within a couple of generations we see the Christians begin to celebrate their own festival, *natalis Christi*, on this date. Centuries later, the Roman Catholic calendar system incorporated this into a required Mass. And the pagans still love the holiday as long as they can worship their 'gods' of materialism and the like.

And so there are several reasons that we ought not to tightly celebrate this day as the birthday of Jesus, but rather as a celebration of the meaning of Christ's birthday. Anyone can put up a nativity, but only those with the wisdom of Christ can really tell you what it means (1 Cor 1:18-25). Unbelievers who love Handel's *Messiah* would deride you if you claim to be unaffected by the music surrounding this passage, but they would call you a dolt if you actually claimed to believe the words.

**So Many Names** (v 6) – These names and characteristics of Jesus Christ are connected to His birth. These titles become manifest because Christ is Incarnate – the God-Man. Isaiah is telling us that these are the meanings of the birth of Christ.

**A Child, A Son** – God became a man. This is the mystery of godliness (1 Tim 3:16).

**The Authority of a Babe** – In our nature He humbled Himself, in our nature He suffered, and in our nature He now reigns. All governments only find their legitimacy in recognizing it as delegated to them from this Child who was born.

**Wonderful** – The word means 'incomprehensible' and 'extraordinary' and can be translated 'secret' (Judges 13:18 AV). He is wonderful, not in the abstract, but in His person, His obedience, His sufferings, His death and resurrection. And He is Secret in our limited knowledge of Him.

**Counselor** – He is His own source of 'the counsel of His will' (Eph 1:11). His good pleasure, His predestined will, and His purposes, all find their origin in the wonderful wisdom of this Child.

**Mighty God** – Here is the great stumbling stone. The Word of God became flesh, and the Word become flesh is God. It is blasphemy to the Jews and foolishness to everyone else. And not only is He God, this little Child is mighty.

**Everlasting Father** – He is 'unto us' the everlasting Father, but not with regard to the persons of the Trinity. Our father in the flesh had been Adam, our federal head. But now we have a new federal Head, a second Adam. And to whom He has been given, He is their Father *everlasting*, that is, forever.

**Prince of Peace** – His kingdom is a kingdom of peace, in that He has '*made peace by the blood of His cross*' (Col 1:20), because of which we are justified and '*have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*' (Rom 5:1). While the world is still a place of turmoil, even for believers, the subjects of this Prince enjoy a '*peace that passes understanding*' (Phil 4:7).

**A Heavenly Kingdom Established on Earth** (v7) – Isaiah teaches us that there is more meaning in the birth of Christ. We are not celebrating a heavenly, *platonic* truth that never finds feet on this dirty earth. Our hope rests in the fact that God visited us in the flesh on this earth, eating, sleeping, laughing, and praying with us as a man. Now, as the head, He reigns from heaven, and His body reigns on earth and its increase will know no end. The gradual increase of peace, justice, and godliness '*incarnated*' upon this earth is to be connected to our celebration of the birth of Christ.

**Your Christmas Gifts** – As you celebrate the birth of Jesus, here are a few practical gifts of application for you -

**Feasting** – You are to celebrate here and now because you are living proof of the advancement of God's kingdom. His increase is taking place in you and yours. God's people have always celebrated God's goodness to them with a lot of eating and drinking *before the Lord* (Deut 14:26), while also preparing for the great wedding supper at His Second Advent.

**Gift-giving** – We are to share with one another as the Lord has graciously given to us (1 Tim 6:18). And as we do so, we must see these gifts as earthly manifestations, or incarnations, of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, and all to His glory.

**No Greed, But True Gratitude** – Fight hard against the culture's influence to make this a party of greed, which amounts to idolatry (Eph 5:5). At the same time, we are commanded to enjoy our material things (1 Tim 6:17), so don't become over-spiritualized in reacting to the pagans. Understood properly, Christmas is a time of enjoying 'stuff'.

**Meditate 'Away in the Manger'** – This is a time to reflect on Christ, not on ourselves. Many of the carols, and certainly reading the 'Christmas' passages of scripture, are helpful in teaching us to look away for our salvation, for true peace, and for everlasting joy.

For unto us a Child is born. For those who have understanding, He has been born unto you. And so Christmas can become a great Christian festival.