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What Jesus Wants for Christmas

By

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Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the “reason” for the season, but what does that mean? Is that just a cool little saying we use each December or does it have a deeper meaning that should impact our lives all year long?

We say we believe the “story” of Christmas, but what does that mean? Do we like the story about the baby Jesus because it’s something that fits in with the annual celebration or does it have a deeper meaning that should impact our lives all year long?

The Bible makes an interesting claim about Jesus Christ:

“And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:22-23

“... where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.” Colossians 3:11

A professor I studied with years ago often said, “all means all and that’s all all means.” I think about that when I read Paul’s Church letters. He emphasized the “All-ness” of Jesus Christ. That was most appropriate given the variety of worldviews of the 1st century AD. It is still appropriate today as we share the Christian worldview with people.

However, I wonder if Christians understand what we’re saying when we quote Scripture and claim that Jesus “fills all in all,” “Christ is all and in all,” “it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should

dwell,” “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” and “who is the head of all principality and power.” We love to focus on the “All-ness” of Christ’s supernatural power (e.g. All-Powerful, All-Knowing) and the impact we believe that Truth should have on people, but do we honestly consider the impact that Truth should have on us?

If Jesus Christ truly “fills all in all” and “is all and in all,” then that should weigh heavy on our minds and hearts every day. We Christians love our little slogans (e.g. Jesus is the Reason for the Season, What Would Jesus Do?, Got Jesus?, Too Blessed To Be Stressed, No King but King Jesus), but have we considered seriously the meaning those words have on our lives? I don’t think so.

What I want for Christmas this year is for all of us to understand what Christmas really means. If God really did what He said He did, then Christmas holds a much deeper and higher meaning than we may have ever understood.

Let’s look at Paul’s claim in Ephesians 1 that Jesus Christ “fills all in all” in the context Paul intended it. He had just presented one of the clearest and most powerful presentations of God’s Eternal Plan that exists in the Bible. Then, Paul told believers what he wanted them to do with that presentation.

“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

Ephesians 1:15-23

You might say that’s what Paul wanted for Christmas. He wanted Christians to “know what is the hope of His calling.” He wanted them to know “what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” He wanted them to know “what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.”

Why did Paul want them to know those spiritual truths? Because Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God in Heaven, “far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” Because God placed all things under Jesus’ feet, “and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

If we really believe that Jesus is **all** of what the apostles wrote about Him, then we will respond to Him differently this Christmas and every Christmas for the rest of our lives. We will not hesitate to obey Him. We will use every opportunity to worship Him. We will look for every conceivable way to make Him known in every avenue of life.

Here’s one last question – what do you believe Jesus wants for Christmas this year? It is a celebration of His “birthday” after all. What is on His Christmas wish list?

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” John 14:21

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” John 15:9-10

“... make disciples of all the nations ...” Matthew 28:19

“... repent and do the first works ...” Revelation 2:5

If Jesus really is who He says he is, we will do what He tells us to do - every day, every time.

What Jesus Wants for the New Year

Another special time for Christians is New Year's Day. It's an opportunity to consider what God did for us the previous year, what we did for Him and what we "will" do for Him in the new year. Which raises the question - What do you think Jesus wants for the New Year?

It's the same thing He wanted for Christmas!

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me." John 14:21

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." John 15:9-10

"... make disciples of all the nations ..." Matthew 28:19

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If you have a red-letter Bible, you'll notice a period of almost 60 years between what He said to His disciples just before His Ascension and what He said to the Apostle John when he was on the island of Patmos.

“And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ Acts 1:7-8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,’ says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’ Revelation 1:8

Prior to His death and resurrection Jesus told the disciples that He would build His Church. In His Revelation Jesus addressed the Church He was building. He told the pastors and elders and deacons and members of His Church what He wanted for the New Year in the 1st Century. We need to hear our Lord’s Words for the New Year in the 21st Century.

Jesus chose to address seven individual churches that were not too far from Patmos. John knew the people in those churches and they knew him. They would know that John was writing the truth.

Jesus said the same thing to each of the seven churches – “I know your works.”

Think about that for a minute. What did Jesus say He was going to do? “I will build My church.” (Matthew 16:18) What did Jesus say to each church that He was building? “I know your works.” Do you see the connection? The Lord’s “Work” is building His Church. A vital part

of Christ's building His Church is knowing the "work" of every church. That makes sense. Jesus is the Chief Architect, Cornerstone and Builder of His Church, so He's going to be involved in every aspect of its design and construction.

That's something we in today's "church" often forget. We are not building "our" church. Jesus is building "His" Church. Our job is to **obey Him** and **do the "work"** He has given us to do.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

Jesus commended only two of the seven churches (Smyrna and Philadelphia). The other five received less than a passing grade from the Lord of the Church.

Ephesus – "Nevertheless I have *this* against you"

Pergamos – "But I have a few things against you"

Thyatira – "Nevertheless I have a few things against you"

Sardis – "... you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead"

Laodocia – "I will vomit you out of My mouth"

While this may seem harsh on first appearance, it's important to remember there are two parts to what Jesus is doing: 1) "I will build My church," and, 2) "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Jesus Christ is not playing games. He is serious and focused on His Father's eternal purpose and plan –

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:4-7

"... and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him." Ephesians 3:9-12

What Jesus said to the seven churches in Revelation was based on the high standard He set by His own teaching and preaching and through the message of the apostles. These churches were not ignorant about what the Lord expected from them ... and neither are we.

What do you think Jesus would say to most churches in the United States and many other countries in the world today? "I know your works." What we've done as churches and church leaders has not gone unnoticed by the Lord of the Church. He knows our works. He knows everything we do.

What else would Jesus say to His Church today? Even more pointed, what would Jesus say to your church and my church today? Would He say "Nevertheless I have *this* against you"? or "... you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead"? or "I will vomit you out of My mouth"? I'm afraid that Jesus would say one of those to almost every local church and denomination in the United States and many other nations.

What I don't think Jesus would say to most of our churches is this:

Smyrna – "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)." Revelation 2:9

Philadelphia – "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name."

Revelation 3:8

What does Jesus Christ want for the New Year?

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” Revelation 2:5

“Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Revelation 2:16

“... all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Revelation 2:23

“I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.” Revelation 3:2-3

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” Revelation 3:18-19

Jesus Christ is building “His Church” and what He says to pastors, elders, deacons and all true members of His Church is ... “repent and do the first works.”

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” Revelation 2:7

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