

DAVID EBAUGH BIBLE SCHOOL

Monarch

November - December 1985

CHRISTMAS

Each year near this time I receive many letters telling me that JESUS was not born on December 25. Most of the scholarly presentations conclude that the birth of JESUS was during the feast of TABERNACLES which occurs in the fall.

I do not disagree with the scholars, but "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas." (A white Christmas comes in the winter, not fall.)

WHEN OR WHY?

We celebrate Christmas on December 25 along with the rest of our society with the full personal knowledge that it probably is not the right day. I don't believe that has ever disturbed any of my children or grandchildren.

We celebrate the fact that JESUS is the son of GOD; we don't celebrate the detail when it took place.

We want the people on our street to know that we are Christians. Of course, there are thousands of other additional ways to show our Christianity.

Here are the Bible reasons and patterns for the way we celebrate Christmas.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Why do we have a Christmas tree? The pattern is given to us in the Old Testament. "And ye shall take you ... BOUGHS OF GOODLY TREES, BRANCHES OF PALM TREES, and the BOUGHS OF THICK TREES, and WILLOWS of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your GOD" (Lev. 23:40). Another type and shadow is, "They should publish and proclaim ... saying, Go forth unto the mount and fetch OLIVE BRANCHES, and PINE BRANCHES, and MYRTLE BRANCHES, and PALM BRANCHES, and BRANCHES of THICK TREES, to make booths." (Nehemiah 8:15)

The use of TREES to decorate the home in preparation for a great religious celebration is a well-established Bible pattern.

In the past some well-meaning Christians have warned us to not display a Christmas tree because of the verse in Jeremiah which goes, "One cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers, that it move not ... learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:1-5).



After careful analysis of the scripture, I have decided to disregard the advice against a Christmas tree. I think it refers to making wooden statues, not Christmas trees, because of verse 5 which says, "They speak not; they must be borne." Walking and talking are attributes of people, not trees. And so, the warning is against making wooden images of people out of a tree (like a totem pole?) rather than a warning against decorating your house with a tree.

GIFTS

Why do we give GIFTS to each other? "That they should make them days of feasting and JOY, and of SENDING PORTIONS one to another" (Esther 9:22).



Our Bible connects the idea of DAYS of JOY with the idea of SENDING GIFTS (portions). That's why GIFTS are appropriate for a BIRTHDAY or an ANNIVERSARY, and especially on the most important birthday in all the world - JESUS'.



We are not mad at Santa Claus. In fact, if Saint Nicholas is really a saint then we are in pretty good company. And, if you really do need to disguise the identity of the giver, then St. Nick can handle the job. The idea of receiving a reward for a good behavior is not so bad. Our GOD used it in Deuteronomy 28. But, we have never felt it was a good idea to fool the kids. Even as infants they knew that dad was Santa.

Sure, the present trend to over-commercialize Christmas is repulsive. So we think it is good to put CHRIST back in CHRISTmas. When I hear a Christmas carol being sung in a store that is owned by a Jew, I don't think that's so bad.

Christmas is the best time I know of to say "thank you" with a present to the many delivery people and service people who make our lives easier.

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Why do we have a big CHRISTMAS DINNER with all the trimmings? "That they should make them days of FEASTING and JOY." (Esther 9:22)

That says FEASTING not FASTING. Sure, there is a time to FAST, but not on a day of JOY.

We try to get the whole gang together for a BIG DINNER.



MOM AND DAD'S HOUSE

Why do we encourage all our children to leave their houses and travel to our house to celebrate Christmas?

"I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy GOD thrice in the year" (Exodus 35:24).

This pattern tells us two things. First, GOD will bless our children by removing unhealthy influences from them (cast out the nations) and bless them by giving them more responsibility and authority with rewards such as raises in pay (enlarge thy borders). Second, protection for their house and possessions while they are away from the responsibility of taking care of them is promised (neither shall any man desire thy land).

NATIVITY SET

Why do we place an inexpensive nativity set (creche) of unbreakable figures of the babe, Joseph, Mary, shepherds, wise men, animals, etc. on a very low table in the living room so that even the smallest grandchildren can play with them?



We encourage the children to ask questions about the figures. Then we tell them the story about the birth of JESUS, in answer to their questions.

The Bible tells us how to make the children ask.

"And Joshua said ... take every man of you a stone ... and these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever ... that when your children ask in time to come, saying, WHAT MEAN YE BY THESE STONES? ... Then ye shall answer them." (Joshua 4:6-7).

This Bible pattern tells us to use material objects to get the attention of the children and that will cause them to ask the right questions so that we can teach them about the goodness of our GOD.

That seems to work better than saying, "Come here. I want to tell you something."

GIVE TO THE POOR

Why do we always GIVE something to the SALVATION ARMY?

"That they should make them days of feasting and joy, and SENDING ... GIFTS TO THE POOR" (Esther 9:22).

In our JOY and in our ABUNDANCE we always remember those less fortunate who are not blessed as we are - by providing GIFTS. Our GIFTS are designed to provide opportunity for an increased chance for a productive life so that the POOR can become RICH and then show their own responsibility eventually by themselves sending GIFTS to other POOR people.

But we don't fall for that trick of just only sending gifts to the POOR. We also send gifts to the RICH because JESUS said, "For ye have the POOR always with you" (Matthew 26:10).

Sometimes a very precious GIFT (an alabaster box of very precious ointment, Matthew 26:7) can not really be appreciated or used by the POOR; it has a very special use (for in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Matthew 26:12).

So we are careful to choose what we GIVE to the POOR and what we GIVE to the RICH.



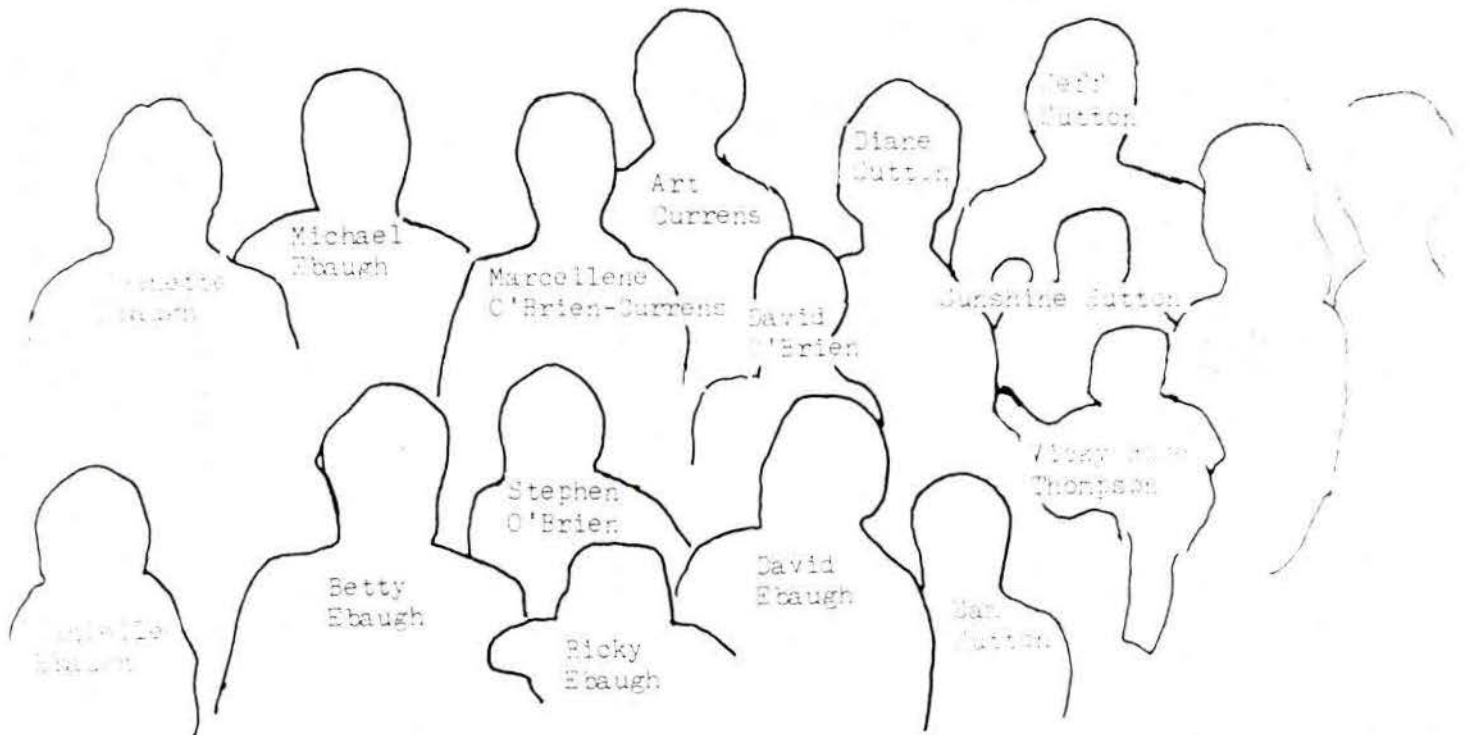
FAITH

If I could give every one of my students a thousand dollars this Christmas, it wouldn't be worth as much as a gift of FAITH. Why? Because a thousand dollars can only go so far. And because quite a few immature students would just waste it on themselves.

But a GIFT of FAITH can be applied to create a whole lot more than a thousand dollars. FAITH can produce a good result that FILLS the WHOLE EARTH. That's worth a whole lot more.

So now I impart to you the GIFT of FAITH. Now, go ahead. You can do it. "I can do all things through CHIRST (the anointing) which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with ... (me)" (Philippians 4:13-14).

This ministry does not exist apart from your gifts.



Here is an up-to-date (September 1985) picture of our family.

Here's a Christmas riddle. We have three daughters and each one of them has a brother. How many children do we have?

See if you can figure out how many couples and their children. There are enough clues to help you get the answer.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU FROM ALL OF US.

PLEASE PRAY FOR US. WE PRAY FOR YOU.