

and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). The wise man said, “Righteousness exaleth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

## It's All About Joy

By Mike Vestal

**T**HE word of God is NOT a book of gloom, doom and despair. It is a book of joy that tells us what God has done to make salvation possible for all men. Joy is so associated with God and His word that it is a contradiction in terms to speak of a joyless Christian. But there are many things Satan does to try to rob us of our joy in Christ. And we really need to keep in mind the many reasons we have to rejoice to keep the devil from getting an advantage over us (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Joy has reference to the gladness of heart that is based upon our trusting God and having a right relationship with Him. At the birth of Christ, an angel said to some shepherds, “I bring to you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people” (Luke 2:10). The fruit of the Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22), and Jesus, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross

(Hebrews 2:2). Joy then is involving trust in God, belief in His promises and a steadfast resolve to know God more deeply. It involves seeing the “big picture” through eyes of faith. What are some reasons that should cause us to “rejoice in the Lord always?” (Philippians 4:4).

[1] The joy of drawing nearer to the presence of God (Ps. 16:11)

[2] The joy of a sinner’s conversion to Christ (Lk. 15:10).

[3] The joy of the Lord’s resurrection from the dead (Matt. 28:8-9).

[4] The joy of forgiveness of sins (Ps. 51:8,22).

[5] The joy of delving deep into God’s word (Jer. 15:15; Ps. 119:14-16).

[6] The joy of fellowship with God and His saints (Phil. 1:25; 2 Jn. 4)

[7] The joy of spiritual discovery (Matt. 13:14).

[8] The joy of suffering for the cause of Christ (1 Pet. 4:12-16; Matt. 5:11-12)

[9] The joy of knowing our names are written in heaven, if we live according to His will (Lk. 10:17,20)

[10] The joy of giving our love, time, strength and money to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:2-5).

Joy is an essential ingredient to true faith (1 Pet. 1:8). And the things written in the word of God are there so we might know full and complete joy (1 Jn. 4). Don’t let the devil rob you of your joy.

## Heartland Herald

1899 Saint Joseph St.  
Dubuque, Iowa 52003



### Heartland church of Christ

3430 Dodge St. Suite 1  
Dubuque, Iowa 52003  
(563) 588-1974

#### Evangelist

Michael Demory

#### Ministers

All members of the church

#### Schedule of Services

Sunday—9:30am  
Wednesday—7:00pm

#### Evangelistic Efforts

Dubuque Advertiser

TV Program  
“The Bible Says”

Public Access  
Cable Channel 16

Free Bible Studies

#### Steps to Salvation

- **Hear the Word**  
(Romans 10:17)
- **Believe** (Hebrews 11:6)
- **Repent** (Luke 13:3)
- **Confess Christ**  
(Matthew 10:32-33)
- **Baptism** (1 Peter 3:21)
- **Faithful Living**  
(Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58)
- **Bearing fruit**  
(Colossians 1:10)

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# Heartland Herald

Practicing 1st Century Christianity in the 21st Century

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## The church & Christmas

By Mike Demory

**H**ERE we are again, the holiday season dressed up in mistletoe & holly, houses decorated with lights twinkling, family and friends exchanging presents, jack frost nipping and chestnuts roasting. This is perhaps my favorite (definitely my wife’s) time of the year, trimming the tree and making sure there is enough tinsel to keep her happy. But added to this season are the men invented nativity scenes, the idea that “Jesus is the reason for the season,” religious hymns concerning the birth of Christ, which contain instruments of music, and special Christmas worship services (Mass), etc.

While it is thrilling indeed to read of the history behind the birth of our Lord and Savior; and to meditate upon the great sacrifice that God gave in leaving heaven to dwell among us in the flesh, we must be very careful – and I stress very careful – not to make it into something that God never intended it to be.

Multitudes of people are shocked to learn that there is not one place in the Scriptures that teaches a special observance of Christ’s birth. The Bible is void of telling us the exact day that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Setting aside December 25<sup>th</sup> as the birthday of Christ the Savior was the invention of men, not God. According to secular history, it seems that the celebration of Christmas did not occur until around 534 when a Roman Pope established a “Mass of Christ” and what is referred to today as the ‘Advent’ season. It was not until the early 1800’s that Americans added such things as decorating trees, sending of cards, giving of gifts and St. Nick to the season.

One popular song during this season “The Twelve Days of Christmas” has to do with the Roman Catholic religious season of “Epiphany.” Christmas they say is both the beginning and the end of the (Catholic) Church year. Epiphany is the final day of the Christmas season, which are counted from December 25<sup>th</sup> to January 5<sup>th</sup> (12 days of Christmas). Epiphany being the day following the Twelfth Day (Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>). The day of Epiphany then kicks off the count down to Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday, Lent and Easter Sunday. All of this having to do with the Roman Catholic religious calendar. But none of it referred to or even commanded by God.

As for the spirit of love and good will to all men that is associated with this time of the year – these should be maintained 24/7/365, not just once in the year. So if Christmas is the invention of men, and God nowhere commanded it’s observance, what is the Christian to do? The answer, as it is in every case, is to be balanced in everything we do. As it is with the organization of the church, our worship of God and godly living, so too with special days. We must seek the authority of God in everything we teach or do (Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9-11). We understand that the Bible does not authorize any other day than Sunday to observe the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:24-29; Acts 20:7). So where is the authority to say that Jesus was born on December 25<sup>th</sup>, and

to observe that day? The answer is that there is no such passage or command.

By all indications from what the Bible says about the birth of Jesus, it was during the time that Caesar took a census of the people, making our Savior likely born between August and September, not December. But even then we cannot accurately tie down an exact date. We must be very careful that we do not become as the Jews of the first century who could not leave behind the rituals and practices of the Old Covenant. Paul wrote to the Galatians for this very reason, saying, *“Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain”* (Gal. 4:8-11). These brethren were mixing together their old habits with the gospel, and Paul feared for their very souls, begging them not to mix truth with error.

With the majority of those claiming to be Christian, observing this season in a religious fashion, the true Christian has to face ridicule for not joining the crowd. There is much pressure from outsiders who understand not the reason for the season, which is something not new to the Lord's church. Paul exhorted the brethren of his day not to allow outside pressure to direct their lives. He said, *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man rob you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, an knit together, increaseth with the increase of God”* (Col. 2:16-19). We should never allow ourselves to feel pressured to join with the fleshly-minded individual, but instead take the opportunity to teach the truth. Ask them for a Scripture that says Jesus was born December 25<sup>th</sup> – or a command from God that we are to observe such a day. This hopefully will disarm the opposer and possibly cause them to think.

This time of year however, is not only celebrated in a

religious way, but in a secular way as well. Like every other holiday of the year that we celebrate in a secular way, be it July 4<sup>th</sup>, Labor Day, Memorial Day or New Year's Day, so too, Christmas can be observed in this fashion by members of the church. There is nothing morally wrong or sinful in observing special days as long as we do not attach any religious significance to them, where God has not. Sending cards with no reference to Christ's birth, singing songs with no religious overtones, exchanging gifts, decorating a tree, or the house without a nativity scene; these are ways that the Christian can properly observe the national holiday called *“Christmas.”*

As people of the Book, we must learn to be silent where the Bible is silent, and speak only where it speaks. If God intended for us to celebrate the birth of His Only Begotten Son, He would have told us so, and given a specific date. It should seem strange that where God did command weekly observance of His Son's death, most religious people refuse doing so (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:24-29). While it may be true that at least one time in the year people are thinking about our Lord and Savior, we must respect the authority of God's Word, which will judge every one of us in the end (Jn.12:48).

## Isaiah Speaks to America

By Bill Brandstatter

**I**SAAH is often referred to as the “Messianic Prophet.” Of all the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah writes more about Christ than any other. He also wrote a commentary on the times and on ours today as well. Solomon asked before Isaiah: *“Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us?”* (Ecclesiastes 1:10). Basically Solomon states that History repeats itself. We need to learn from what Isaiah wrote to Judah.

Isaiah's message for Judah is also one for America.

In chapter five, several woes are pronounced on Judah that need to be examined. There are woes directly related to the sins if Judah and to prosperity. The fate of wicked men then and now can be clearly seen.

The first woe is to greedy land barons. *“Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field...”* (Isaiah 5:8). There are many today like this. Their whole being is consumed with the love for more and more money (I Timothy 6:10), no matter how they get it. They buy more property to bring in more money. One of the sins that many in America are guilty of is materialism. Jesus said, *“take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (Luke 12:15).

The second woe is on alcoholic drinking (Isaiah 5:11). America has become a society of drinking and partying at any cost. The parking lots at taverns are often lined with cars. The number of teenaged alcoholics continues to climb at an alarming rate. Verse 13 says, *“...they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of their hands.”* Solomon wrote, *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived by is not wise”* (Proverbs 20:1). Needless to say, America is full of the unwise. Hosea adds, *“Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart”* (Hosea 4:11).

The third woe depicts men pulling iniquity with cords of falsehood (Isaiah 5:18). The men Isaiah mentions are so entangled in sin and iniquity that they become slaves to it. Paul wrote, *“To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servant ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.”* (Romans 6:16). Is America headed in the same direction? In some areas---we are already there.

The fourth woe is upon those that *“call evil good and good evil”* (Isaiah 5:20). This woe is pronounced against moral corruption. If one doubts the moral corruption that America is undergoing, all that needs to be done is watch about 2 hours of prime time TV to see what is being put into the homes of Americans. Many today as in Isaiah's time want nothing to do with the Bible and obeying God. In the time of Hosea, people were destroyed for lack of knowledge, *“My people are destroyed for lack*

## Benevolent Need

Brother K. Prasad lives in the Andhra Pradesh district of India and attended the Preaching school in Chennai. He has been preaching for over 6 years in many towns and villages where busses will take him. If you would be interested in helping Brother Prasad acquire a motorcycle which would allow him greater mobility to preach in more places, please let Mike know. We need to collect \$500, so please consider assisting us in this effort to help a Brother in need (Galatians 6:9-10; 1 John 3:17-18).

*of knowledge: because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...”* (Hosea 4:6). They had forgotten the law of God. The same as today---America has forgotten the law of God.

The fifth woe is upon those who are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight (Isaiah 5:21). People like this are a dime a dozen! Anytime man tries to rely on himself entirely, failure will result. *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). The humanist of today certainly fits into this category. He believes that man has out grown the idea of God. His goal, according to the humanist, is the development of his own personality, which according to his philosophy, ceases to exist after death. The humanist believes that man is a result of a continuous natural process. Those who hold this belief will answer someday for it (II Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:12). Jesus stated, *“he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48). Those who are wise in their own eyes will be judged by the Word of God.

Let us learn from the lessons of Isaiah. In so doing Christians should strive to live a faithful, godly life by being *“not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good,*

## Remember in Prayer

### Special Prayers

Lyra Grochmal (8 yrs)—spine cancer— tumors have returned, will start different course or treatment  
 Lewis Rosaldo—stomach issues  
 Stacie Wynn—recovering from surgery  
 Mary Boor  
 Christopher (Dbq Soldier in Afghanistan stepped on land mine and lost both legs)  
 Wade Miller—diabetes  
 Griselda & Vanessa—that they are strong enough to defend the truth  
 Judy Jones

Linda Krabacher - bursitis  
 Toni Waddings step-mother—leukemia  
 Dixie Rickannecker  
 Susan Noel & Russell Bender— that she studies to understand God  
 Charles Pogue  
 Lilly Rucker & family  
 Laurie Davis—Multiple Sclerosis  
 Yolanda Ritchwood—M.S.  
 Natalie Bauman—M.S.  
 Rockfalls church of Christ  
 TV Program  
 State of our Nation  
 The closing of Planned Parenthood  
 The church  
 The erring & the Lost

### Military

Michael Chlamon— In process of changing posts  
 Jonathan Duckstein—Afghanistan  
 Daniel Heflin—Afghanistan  
 Soldiers defending our borders  
 Military families who are coping while loved ones in harms way

### Evanglizing the World

Garret Derouin—Webster, Wisc.  
 Scott Nedland—Rice Lake, Wisc.  
 Brian Sherrell—Rockfalls, IL.  
 Bernie Guzman—Philippines  
 Johnny Robertson— Martinsville, Vir  
 Micah Robertson—Danville, Vir

James Oldfield—Riedsville, NC  
 Derrick Brown —Jamaica  
 Gary Workman—Ukraine  
 Kolakaluri Prasad—Nalgonda, Dist., India  
 G. Prabhu Kumar—Chennai, India  
 John O'Neal—India & Ghana  
 Holger Neubauer—South Haven, Michigan

## Calendar of Events

**Dec. 20, 23**—Mediacom—editing new programs

**Dec. 26**—Birthday—M.P. Demory