

Resurrection Reflections

A Glimpse at Celebration of Christian Holidays in America

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In our hurried and harried culture, holiday seasons fly past and yet seem perpetually looming. Stores put up their Christmas décor in September, children begin having visions of sugar plums (and Nintendo and Wii) dancing in their heads long before the holiday is upon us, and rehearsals for the Nativity play begin before Thanksgiving. We cut our trees and decorate our homes a month or more before the Christmas holiday arrives. The commercialization of the season can overshadow the humble birth of our Savior over 2,000 years ago in an obscure town in Israel (in a small and stinking stable). We've come a long way from celebrating the simple yet profound truth that Jesus, the King of Heaven, entered the world through the humblest of circumstances. Yet, if we pause to consider this and also observe the life of Christ, we can learn that, in God's economy, the wise are perceived as fools, the greatest among us is a servant to all, and the riches of this world are dung compared to the glories of the kingdom.

Contrast this holiday with Easter, the highest holy day in the Church. There's typically no big holiday decorating or present-giving, and relatively little commercialization (apart from candy baskets and fancy clothing). Yet, without this day, there would be no reason for celebrating Christmas, apart from recognizing another birthday of an influential person, like Lincoln or Washington. But Jesus was far more than an influential person; He was the King of the Universe, the Alpha and Omega, the Word of God made flesh! (John 3:16) Easter is what gives Christmas meaning. Without the empty tomb, we'd have just another religious leader. All the leaders of various world religions died and stayed dead. Jesus died, was buried, and then rose from the dead. Without His resurrection, we'd just have another nice guy gone from the planet. Instead, we have the hope of eternity in heaven and the certainty of the gospel's truth. How then do we respond?

- 1) **Believe** – Believe in the Gospel - that God incarnate came to save us – because through His death and resurrection, we have a firm foundation to trust that He will give us new life (here on earth), and also eternal life in Heaven (after we die).
- 2) **Share** – Share the Gospel message - because Jesus, who gave his life for us, also gave us a command to do so. The goal of the Gospel is not just “fire insurance” to preserve us from hell, but to transform our earthly lives into ones that give God glory, that reflect His love, and that draw people to Him – the Savior and Redeemer of the world... the One who came to earth to give us *new* life and life *eternal*.

Now, that's worth celebrating!