

My Personal Testimony of How I Came to Know Jesus and the Real Meaning of Christmas

In the summer of 1979, while sharing a rented house with several of my college fraternity brothers in Bangor, Maine I came under the conviction of the Holy Ghost.

I was living in an old room adjacent to a garage and sleeping with just a mattress on the floor. While lying on that mattress one night after a drinking binge I turned on the television to see and hear a fiery preacher boldly proclaiming the gospel.

Immediately my senses were arrested, and I sobered up. My conscience was smitten. I knew I was not living right. I knew the things I was doing were sinful in God's eyes.

As the gospel program came to an end, the preacher extended an offer for the viewer to write him if they had made a decision for Christ. If my recollection is accurate, I was held back by a thought. How can I stop sinning? So I wrote a letter to the television preacher asking him that very question. I never received a response so I continued to live a sinful lifestyle.

At this time the college mail room clerk who was a stalwart Christian had taken an interest in me and was a gospel witness in my life. This man was just a few years older than I and shone with the peace and presence of God. My curiosity was aroused by his disposition. One day, I saw his Bible open on his desk and knew instantly the secret of his bright countenance. I was intrigued by that.

Over a process of time, he shared many things with me, always answering all of my religious questions with, "the Bible says." One day, in a moment of exacerbation, I asked him if he

could not think for himself and give me his own opinion instead of quoting the Bible all the time. His response: "The Bible says that the carnal mind is enmity or hostility against God." Aarrgh!

I saw that this man really believed the Bible to be the unadulterated Word of God, and he lived by it. That impressed me. As a devout Roman Catholic, I had never met anyone like him.

Gradually we became good friends, and he led me to Christ and taught me to observe the things He commanded from His Word. Immediately, he baptized me in water. The desire to drink, smoke weed and live a party lifestyle departed from me as I read His Word. I quickly proved my repentance by getting rid of my rock-n-roll albums that promoted sex, drugs and evil. I also made restitution by paying for some pornographic magazines I had stolen from a convenience store.

I spoke to the store manager and offered an explanation as I handed him the money and a letter with my testimony—quite different from many so-called conversions today when a prayer is made, a preacher's hand is shaken, but no change is forthcoming.

I thank God for my humble beginnings and for a faithful witness who taught me what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Isn't this what we should all be doing for those who are still lost?

This week, as I celebrate yet another Christmas—my 38th in Christ, I am reminded that just as Christ was birthed and formed in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, so has He been birthed and formed in each of us who are His disciples. In a real way, His incarnation 2,000 years ago repeatedly reproduces itself in human flesh every time someone is truly born of the Spirit and follows Jesus.

Although I strongly despise the many pagan rituals and

commercialism that surround the Christmas season, I still celebrate our Savior's birth with great joy and cheer. What I grossly detest is the perversion of the message the angels brought to the shepherds concerning His birth.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men!" (Luke 2:13-14).

The message the angels announced was not man having peace and goodwill towards one another, but it was a communication from the heavenly Father to mankind: "The armies of the heavenly host have not come to destroy you but to bring you a message of peace and good will. The Father has sent His Son as a Lamb (that is why He was born in a stable) and a peace offering to all of mankind."

How sad that the peace and goodwill the Father offers to all of mankind in His Son has been reduced to, "All human beings be nice to each other and give each other gifts."

His birth and incarnation—God becoming man—should remind us all of God's ultimate purpose to be embodied in mankind, and for each of us to represent Him and His attributes.

"Christ in [us], the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27b). This is the real Jesus and the real meaning of Christmas.

Merry Christmas to you all.