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As it is the month of December when most folks celebrate a highly commercialized Christmas season, this month's Topical Bulletin will focus on the question: ***What is Christmas?***

People celebrate Christmas in many ways, but it behooves Christians to consider what the Christmas holiday is really about. Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language supplies us with the following interesting definition: "**CHRIST'MAS**, *n.* [*Christ* and *mass*, Sax. *maessa*; a holy day or feast; D. *kersmis*.] 1. The festival of the Christian church observed annually on the 25th day of December, in memory of the birth of Christ, and celebrated by a particular church service. The festival includes twelve days. 2. Christmas-day."

Furthermore, when linked with the name of Christ the term *mass* – not to be confused with the Roman Catholic service – is defined in the same dictionary as follows: "**MASS**, *n.* [Sax. *maessa*, *maesse*; Fr. *messe*; It. *messa*; Sp. *misa*; D. *misse*; G. Dan. *messe*; Sw. *messa*; Low L. *missa*. The word signifies primarily leisure, cessation from labor, from the L. *missus*, *remissus*, like the L. *feriae*; hence a feast or holiday... Hence Sax. *hlafmaesse*, lemmas, breadfeast, and *Martin-mas*, *Michael-mas*, *candlemas*, *christmas*.]

Accordingly, CHRISTMAS = CHRIST-MASS = CHRIST-FEAST-HOLY-DAY

Additionally, the "Lutheran Cyclopedia" (page 170) informs us: "[The] earliest certain mention of celebrating on December 25 is in the philocalian calender of 354 [A.D]."

Thus, the tradition of celebrating the birth of the Christ child is over 1650 years old.

Comment: based on the foregoing information, it is certain that CHRISTMAS IS A FEAST IN WHICH THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST IS TO BE CELEBRATED— A HOLY DAY! But sadly, society at large has eliminated Jesus Christ from the very holiday which bears His name in its title.

Now, it's true that God's Word does not command us to celebrate Jesus' birth. However, God's Holy Word does say: "This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners... [And] all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." (1 Timothy 1:15; John 5:23 KJV) Looking at the original Greek wording we see that to HONOUR means to revere, value, and venerate. [τιμᾶω {tim-ah'-o} 1) to estimate, fix the value 1a) for the value of something belonging to one's self 2) to honour, to have in honour, to revere, venerate (Abridged Thayer's Greek/English Lexicon)] Therefore, one way to show we value Jesus Christ coming into this world to redeem us is that we celebrate His birth, because if Jesus Christ had not come to save us sinners we would all be lost and damned, for "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12 KJV)

We ALL need salvation since the Holy Bible declares: “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. [And] the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 3:23; 6:23 KJV) Indeed, our sin earns us temporal, spiritual, and eternal death. Jesus Christ alone delivers us from death and doom!

We cannot earn forgiveness for even one sin, let alone all of our sins, because all our works are in themselves sinful since we who do such works are sinners, for Isaiah 64:6-7 informs us, “we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And *there is* none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.” Hence, it is also written: “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.” (Romans 3:19-22 KJV) Accordingly, we ALL need Jesus Christ because He alone is our Rescuer from never-ending ruin— hell, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:44 KJV)

Therefore, we should surely and joyfully celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We should thank and praise the Lord Jesus Christ for willingly and lovingly taking upon Himself a human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary, for it is written: “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11 KJV)

Let us happily and in sincerity confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, praising Him to the glory of God the Father who sent Him, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (John 3:16-17 KJV) Take it to heart that God has given the world the greatest gift in the Person of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ! Jesus is the Supplier of real peace— peace between God and us, which is why on the very first Christmas, “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, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:13-14 KJV) Jesus is evidence of God’s gracious good will toward men! JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON! To truly celebrate Christmas one must celebrate Christ Jesus the Savior of sinners.

Don't throw away the greatest Gift this world has ever been given by God; rather, let us sincerely repent of our sins, and let us place and keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, for the Holy Bible tells us: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (1 John 1:9-10; 4:9; John 3:36; Acts 16:31 KJV)

My friends, let us not only keep Christ in Christmas; let us realize that CHRIST IS WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ALL ABOUT! Christmas is not about the Savior plus Santa; Christmas is not about the Redeemer plus reindeer; CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT CHRIST JESUS, celebrating His birth, His coming to earth to save us sinners and open heaven to us. Therefore, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker." (Psalm 95:6 KJV) Let us worship and adore Christ the Lord.

Have a blessed Christmas season, celebrating Jesus our Savior!

m.e.l.