

In The Spirit of Christmas

'Nancy Dugan was nearly four as Christmas drew near. The parents and four older children all had tried to prepare Nancy for Christmas by talking with her about the real meaning of Christmas and why the family celebrated it. Nancy had a wonderful Christmas with a lot of presents and toys. A few days later, Nancy was talking with her older sister about what a great Christmas she had, and said: "I sure hope Joseph and Mary have another baby".'

Nancy really got into the "spirit" of Christmas. Sort of. And for nearly all the world, the Spirit of Christmas is the most important aspect of this yearly celebration when observed in non-Christian areas. While mythical Santa Claus is ubiquitous, the true reason for the season still can be found beneath all the accretions that have encrusted themselves on this second most important celebration of Christians. And probably the two most crucial elements for its importance in the furtherance of the knowledge of Christ Jesus where few believe are its inescapable emphasis on the gift giving, often sacrificially without expectation of return, and the traditional music that accompanies the holiday.

Though it perhaps has become a little less pervasive in recent years, still, there is a perceptible difference in the atmosphere at this time of year. Though there are many exceptions,

most expect this time of year is somehow different and special, that people should behave better towards each other during these days. The required “lights” of the season necessarily encourage feelings of joy and happiness due to the simple fact that the many lights are pretty, beautiful and uplifting. For that is the very nature of light. When it gets dark, it’s hard to see. When it’s light, we can see. When there are many pretty lights at night, not only can we see our way around far more easily, it’s pleasant to go about because the lights themselves are beautiful. How many people who otherwise don’t celebrate Christmas will still drive around to see eye-catching lights that many people adorn their houses and gardens with? And usually literally accompanying the lights is music. Though these days, much newer seasonal music tends toward the vulgar, still traditional music is both uplifting, and the many carols not only extol the virtues promoted during Christmas, but directly praise the God Who came in the flesh down to earth to save us from our sins, and restore us to right relationship with the One and Only Living God, Creator of All Things.

For every nativity scene publicly and privately displayed, God is praised and exalted in ways small and great. Silently. While music whose lyrics speak the truth of what Christmas is all about, whether actually sung or just instrumentally played over speakers, still contributes to the “spirit” of Christmas in ways few realize. If you sense the difference in atmosphere during the Christmas season, especially since we all live in America, original-

ly an avowedly, unabashedly, proudly Christian nation, then one has probably made the connection, consciously or not, that things during this time of year are more “heavenly-like” than other times of the year. So why is this? Well, it’s actually quite simple. What do we know about Heaven? We know that God resides there, as much as the infinite, omnipresent (everywhere present simultaneously all the time) can be in any one place, He is forever seated on His throne of grace and glory, forever surrounded by the unending praises and worship of all the universe and cosmos and creation all the time. This, if you will, is the “default” atmosphere of Heaven. It’s filled with God’s presence, the Spirit of God, inhabiting the praise and worship of all creation. The Bible specifically tells us that God resides in, lives in, inhabits, is enthroned on, the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). So, then it should come as no surprise that when there is praise and worship of Him, whether from actual people in a particular place, or just pre-recorded and being replayed through audio-visual devices, the atmosphere of Heaven comes. The more praise and worship, the more authentic and heartfelt, the more the atmosphere of Heaven comes in and becomes more and more discernible. And the more atmosphere of Heaven draws near, the closer people are drawn to Heaven and its Creator, Ruler and Occupant! Namely Father God, God the Son, Christ Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit.

With all that being true, if you want to be closer to God in your daily life, then attract the atmosphere of Heaven to you. put

on some Christian music. It's as simple as that. If you don't have any, buy some. You can start by listening to Christian radio stations, over the air or streaming on the Internet. There are myriads of choice out there. If you look, you'll find them. They're not hidden under a bushel basket! So instead of just leaving the TV on blaring the latest lies and deceptions from mainstream media, spend at least a good part of your day listening to Christian music. And at this time of year, just about any station playing Christmas music, will now and again play some traditional music the words of which are sacred, meaning they praise the God Whose earthly birth and manifestation we celebrate on Christmas Day.

Doing so is one very simple, easy and painless way of obeying the earnest pleas Apostle Peter wrote us in II Peter 3. He says so much in just a few verses. The Apostle Paul often wrote long, exhaustive treatises in his letters to us, and Peter even mentions them in verse 16 commenting that "some of [Paul's] comments are hard to understand". Peter, on the other hand, in his two letters, is far briefer and more concise. Look again at what he tells us, that we really should already know, in the beginning few verses, 2-7, of this chapter: "I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles". This tells us that everything he's reminding us of was already written about by the Old Testament prophets. And reiterated by the apostles themselves. Question is, do we even bother to read the Old Testament prophets? If we

don't, is it any wonder that people haven't the faintest idea of what's going on in the world today? Why should we be surprised if so many "educated" people, truly don't know a man from a woman, that "context" determines if it's okay to massacre Jews?

Verse 3 continues: "Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires". Do you know people like that? Seems they're all over the place. Verse 4: "They will say, 'What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created'". So, how many people we see on the "mainstream" news talk about the Lord's return? Can't say that I've heard even one! Wonder why. Verse 5 answers: "They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of His command, and He brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water". I've said for many years now that people will believe what they want to believe—facts notwithstanding! Doesn't matter what the facts are. If they don't like them, they'll just ignore, suppress, censor whatever it is they don't like, and lie, fabricate, and deceive with whatever they do like.

Peter's verse 6 next is categorically denied by the masses of unrighteous people out there: "Then [God] used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood". "Nope. Never happened", claim today's "all-wise evolutionary scientists", while the indisputable evidence of America's own Grand Canyon stares at

them in the face. Our Apostle Peter now prophesies to us, basing his words on what's already been written in the Old Testament and related ancient Hebrew writings. Verse 7: "And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed". Note here that after the creation of mankind, things had gotten so utterly corrupted that God had to destroy all life on the planet and start over with Noah's ark. And God did that via a worldwide flood, such that the world had never seen before nor ever will again. However, in the interim few thousand years, things have gotten terrible yet again. Now Peter declares that another reset is coming. This time of God's final judgement on the earth will be by fire. In short, things will be burned up. Peter describes it in verse 10: "the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire". All the ungodly will, thankfully, be destroyed.

Our fate is decidedly different as he states in verse 13: "we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth [God] has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness". Therefore, Peter tells us in verse 14: "And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in His sight". And that, folks, sums up how we're to live every day. Deliberately draw near to Him and the Spirit of Christmas, every year, both during this season, but also all the year long!

