

## **Christmas Love & Life**

I John 4:9

Over the years I have collected articles and pamphlets proclaiming why Christians should not celebrate Christmas. Here are some examples:

“Shall the Christian Celebrate Christmas?”

“Ten Reasons Why Observing Christmas is Wrong.”

“Christmas” – Jeremiah 10:1-4 - *Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the LORD: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple.*

What is the text of Jeremiah 10? Idolatry. So, if you worship your Christmas tree, you better get rid of it. But this passage is not talking about a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Certainly there are worldly and pagan ideas incorporated in “Christmas” in society. In hope as believing parents we are smart enough not to pass along pagan traditions, but rather to make this a time to teach about Christ’s coming and all that that means.

Our text this morning describes in very exact words the event we call Christmas.

We want to consider five major points in these verses:

- I The Manifestation of God’s Love**
- II The Method of God Manifesting His Love**
- III The Meaningful Purpose of God’s Love**
- IV The Magnitude of God’s Love**
- V The Message of God’s Love**
- I The Manifestation of God’s Love**

A. The context and connection of this phrase.

1. Verse 8 – God is love – not “is loving,” Nor “loves,” but God is Love.
2. Verse 9 – then describes how that fact of God’s nature is manifested.
3. “In This” – in what?
  - a. Could read “by this” – refers to the rest of verse 9 instead of back to something preceding.
  - b. Especially the second clause.

B. “Manifested” – word means displayed.

1. Used in Romans 5:8 - *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

C. “Toward us” – not best, should be “in us.”

1. See I John 4:12 - *God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.*
2. Like example in John 9:3 – same word.

## II The Method of God Manifesting His Love

A. “God Sent”

1. This corresponds to idea in John 3:16 – “He gave.”
2. John 5:36 - *But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish — the very works that I do — bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.*
3. John 17:4 - *I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.*
4. John 19:30 - *So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.*
5. John 20:21 - *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*
6. Jesus Christ was sent by the Father as a demonstration of His love.

7. “Sent” is in perfect tense – means it happened in the past, but also emphasizes the abiding results of Christ’s mission here on earth.
8. Contrast – verse 10 “sent” in aorist tense – He came once and accomplished the propitiation.

B. “His only begotten son” – what does this mean?

1. Denotes a unique relationship.
2. “Begotten does not refer to His birth.
3. He was “only begotten” in heaven, He was “sent” to earth.
4. This word really means His relationship to the Father was one of a kind, no one else has the same relationship.
5. Why is He so unique? Because He is God, He is not created or adopted son like we can be, rather He is eternally God.

C. “Into the World”

1. Not to Mars, not to some other galaxy.
2. To this world where people are.

### **III The Meaningful Purpose of God’s Love**

A. “That We Might Live Through Him.”

1. Can we live without Him? – Physically yes and no; spiritually no.
2. We were all dead – Ephesians 2:1,5 - *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins; even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*

B. We can have life here and eternally.

1. Acts 17:28 - *For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'*
2. Eternal I Thessalonians 5:10 - *Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.*
3. I John 5:10-12.

C. John's Gospel emphasizes this life we can have:

1. John 1:4 - *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
2. John 5:24 - *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*
3. John 10:10 - *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*
4. John 14:6 - *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*
5. John 20:31 - *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

D. This is answer to Job's question.

1. Long ago he asked "If a man die, shall he live again" – Job 4:14.
2. The answer in Jesus Christ is yes, we can have life in union with Jesus Christ
3. Christ means eternal life, abundant life, satisfying life, indwelling life.

#### **IV The Magnitude of His Love – 5 ways the greatness of God's Love is shown in I John 4:9-10.**

A. In the greatness of the gift which love prompted God to bestow upon us.

1. His unique son.
2. Not just any son, but the eternal son, forever present son, equal son.
3. Stott "No greater gift of God is conceivable because no greater gift was possible."

B. In the person giving the gift – God the Father.

1. This was not some detached, impersonal bystander giving us a gift.
2. This was God giving Himself.

C. In the purpose of the Son's mission.

1. "That we might live through Him.
2. Totally unselfish motive in giving.

D. In considering the recipients of His love.

1. Verse 10a.
2. God loves those who are so unlovely.
3. Do you give gifts to those who hate you and despise you and curse you? That is what God did.

E. In the character of Christ's death – verse 10b.

1. It was a costly, self-sacrificing gift.
2. Propitiation is a satisfying sacrifice – God's nature demanded a sacrifice and God's love provided the sacrifice.
3. What a great gift of love!

## **V The Message of His Love – What Does Christ's Mission say about God's Love?**

A. That it is a love independent of and earlier than ours.

1. He loves us, not because we love Him, but because He is God.
2. His love comes first and without any guarantee to a response from us.

B. That it is a love which gives its best.

1. God sent His son.
2. God so loved that He gave His unique Son.
3. Romans 8:32 - *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

C. That it is a love that takes note of and overcomes our sin.

1. His love did not, could not overlook our sin.

2. His love took our sin into account and did something about it.
3. Same with a father – you cannot ignore the sin of your son or daughter just because you love them.
4. A love that cares not for the moral character of its object is not love, but hate.
5. This is why we read in verse 10 about propitiation.
6. God removed that barrier that kept that life of verse 9 from entering our hearts.
7. Before you can “live through Him” your sins must be removed by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

In I John 2:5 we see that we may manifest our love to God by obedience to His Word. In I John 3:16-18 we see that we manifest our love to each other by sacrifice. Here in I John 4 we see God displayed His love for us by sending His only begotten Son into the world to die for us. Has that penetrated your heart? He came that you might live.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son – here’s the condition – “that whosoever believeth in Him,” not universal, only those who believe will live.

Can you say in I John 4:10 “propitiation for my sin.” That is where you must start to know the love of God.