

Why bother?

"I do not like them," say some. "I love them," say others. That is how people react to the letters included with cards at Christmas. It seems they are like marmite. They are either loved or hated.

Some enjoy catching up with what their extended family and friends have done in the last year. Others, like the writer Lynne Truss, find the updates on high-achieving children and exotic holidays annoying.

And then there are those who get irritated by the references to Jesus. They take exception to being reminded he is the reason for the season. Some protest there was revelry at this time of year long before Christians began to celebrate Christmas on 25 December. People, in northern climes, have long sought to cheer themselves up in the season of short days and long nights!

Thus, some want to see references to Christ left out? Just let us enjoy ourselves, they say.

The argument appeals to more than a few. But many are reluctant to admit it. They do want to upset the children. So they put up with a bit of religion but concentrate more on special events like a trip to see Father Christmas, a pantomime or street decorations!

But that is to live in a world of make-believe and entertainment? We do not want to be kill-joys. But we do want realism.

Who are we?

We know truth is suppressed. However it does not alter three basic facts. *One*, we are God's special creation. *Two*, we are created to live for him. And *three*, we are created to enjoy him now and for ever. It is only right, therefore, that we should be God-centred individuals. We are to delight in him, his love, his power and his purposes.

The trouble is by nature we do not. Far from it, we prefer to focus on ourselves, our desires, and our wants. Thus we need to add a *fourth* fact. Human beings are not right with God.

We all know this deep down within ourselves. Our consciences tell us it is the case. To illustrate the point we may reflect on what people invariably do when things go wrong. They may pray. But why and to whom? They may ask questions, usually about life, its meaning and purpose. At this point many talk about being aware of having done wrong. But to whom and in whose eyes? And, yes, many admit it is our Maker they fail. It is he to whom they plead for help.

The remarkable fact is our Maker is ready to help. How?

We need to go back to the beginning. The first man and woman made a mess of their and our lives. Yes what Adam did he did not just as a private person but as a representative man. In the purposes of God he stood in our place. Thus when he turned from God we did. And that is where we all are now. By nature we are turned in on ourselves. We do not love God.

But the God who put mankind under a curse also gave a promise. He would send a Saviour to rescue us from our plight. At the appointed time the promised one was given.

The evidence is clear and conclusive. All that was predicted of the Messiah - the place of his birth (Bethlehem), his parentage (the family of David), his work (to show he is King and God made man) and his suffering (on a cross in the place of his disobedient people) - all that (and more) is fulfilled in Jesus Christ alone.

Though we are not required by God to celebrate Christmas, it is a reasonable thing to do. If God so loved us that he gave his only-begotten Son for us; and if Jesus Christ gave himself for us, dying the death disobedient people should suffer for ever, then it seems only right to celebrate his birth. Yes, we can do that every day. But we do not. So it is useful to have a particular time for it. Christmas is that time.

May God make you happy as you celebrate the gift of Jesus Christ.

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