



Christmas Under Wraps

Look for the Light



"Christmas is the only Christian holy day that is also a major secular holiday. The result is two different celebrations, each observed by millions of people at the very same time..."



The secular Christmas is a festival of lights, a time for family gatherings, and a season to generously give to those closest to us and to those in greatest need. These practices are enriching to everyone, and they are genuinely congruent with the Christian origins of the celebration... My fear is, however, that its true roots will become more and more hidden to most of the population.



The emphasis on light in darkness comes from the Christian belief that the world's hope comes from outside of it. The giving of gifts is a natural response to Jesus' stupendous act of self-giving. The concern for the needy recalls that the Son of God was born not into an aristocratic family but into a poor one... My hope is to make the truths of Christmas a little less hidden." (Tim Keller)

Isaiah 9:2, 5-7

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² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned... ⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Some of the earliest signs that the Christmas season is upon us are the appearance of Christmas lights.





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At the time surrounding the birth of Jesus, think about the evil that was present...



¹⁹ When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.



²¹ Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. ²² Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.



"What is going on here? They are 'looking toward the earth' and to human resources to fix the world. They are looking to their experts—to the mystics, to the scholars—for solutions. Yes, they say, we are in darkness, but we can overcome it ourselves.



People make the same claim today. Some look more to the state, some more to the market, and everyone looks to technology. Yet they share the identical assumption. Things are dark but we believe we can end that darkness with intellect and innovation."

(Tim Keller)



"Purposeless and void of meaning is the world which Science presents for our belief... The origin, growth, hopes and fears, loves and beliefs of humanity are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms. No fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave.



All the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system. The whole temple of humanity's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins...



Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation be safely built."

(Bertrand Russell)

One of the most beautiful truths of the Christmas story is that only a Light from above—from *outside*—can cause the darkness to flee.





The sun gives us life.



"We exist only because God is upholding us, keeping us together every moment. You are borrowing your being from him. This is true not only of your physical body but also of your spirit, your soul."

(Tim Keller)



The sun gives us life.

The sun reveals the truth.



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The sun reveals the truth.

The sun is beautiful and illuminates beauty.



"If God has really been born in a manger, then we have something that no other religion even claims to have. It's a God who truly understands you, from the inside of your experience. There's no other religion that says God has suffered... that he knows what it is like to be abandoned by friends, to be crushed by injustice... Christmas shows he knows what you're going through." (Tim Keller)



"Jesus was born in poverty and eventually suffered infinite pain—all for us—and thought it well worth his while."

(Dorothy Sayers)



"Jesus goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him... Think of a diver... gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay..."





Then up again, back to color and light, his lungs almost bursting, till suddenly he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover."

(C.S. Lewis)



Closing Reflections

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Are there dark shadows falling across your life this Christmas season, or across the lives of people you love?

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In what ways have you been looking "toward the earth" for peace, hope, and security instead of toward the Light of Jesus?

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What do you need most from the dawning light: more flourishing life, more solid truth, or more beautiful joy?

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Give thanks to Jesus for His willingness—His desire—to stoop down and bring our ruined world into his glorious light.



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