

view

This Week's Agenda

December 18, 2005

The Lord's Day

8:30AM & 10:15AM: SINGING, PRAYER, LORD'S SUPPER

Sermon: David Posey,

5 PM – Singing, Lord's Supper and Sermon

5:30 PM: Classes for all ages from 18 months and up

Adult Classes

- Auditorium: Jeff Herrin - I & II Thessalonians
- Room 11-12: Divorce & Remarriage - David Posey
- Room 7: Rich Mowrer – Gospel of John (Greek study)

News & Prayer Concerns

News

Please see Dana Carrozza regarding a special need for a young woman who is having a baby. She needs a place to stay and is willing to be a live-in nanny.

Doug Wells' father found out that he has cancer and that it has spread to many parts of his body. Please keep Doug in your prayers.

Many of Folsom's college students should be home by now. It will be great to see them again.

Tim Dickey is home, and had his final surgery on Friday and is doing very well. He will be in the hospital for about five days, however. Keep him in your prayers.

Brad Ludlow's grandfather passed away recently. Keep the family in mind as you pray.

Prayers Needed

Bertha Hamilton, after surgery; Julie Baumgarten; the family of Tony Moyer; Debbie Reagan (death of father, Clarence Turner); Wayne Terry, (death of his stepmother, Juanita Terry); Greg Bailey (Steve Bremer's nephew, battling cancer); Belle Smith; Martha Colvin; Dawn Woolington; Carly Cain (cancer is in remission); Nita Sellgren (Sharron Wade's mother); Ben Thorp; Sharon Jones; Duane Lowe; Doris Phillips (Wes Shamblin's grandmother); Becky Woolpert; Kathy & Hank Wilson; Jamie Cole; Monica Fulton (Dave's mother); Brady Rembleski's grandfather; Justin Ivie's father; Tom Royston; Margaret Everett (San Jose); Cheryl Wilson; Laurieann Reagan and Oliver Sasse. Also pray for those who are expecting: Carrie Sadowy, Angie Cain, Nicole Grinnell and Janelle Fender.

Out of Town

Debbie and Hank Cain, the Warshaws and many others are out of town for the holidays. Please pray for their safe travel.

December 18, 2005

YOUNG PEOPLE MEET TONIGHT AFTER SERVICES

Wednesday

10 AM - Bible Study - No OT History class for the next two weeks.

7:30 PM - Classes for all ages 18 months and up.

Adult Classes

- Auditorium: Dan Singleton – Daniel
- Room 11-12: Evangelism – David Posey, Sr.

Bible Reading

Sunday – Revelation 3-4; Isaiah 57

Monday – Revelation 5-6; Isaiah 58

Tuesday – Revelation 7-8; Isaiah 59

Wednesday – Reflection

Thursday – Revelation 9-10; Isaiah 60

Friday – Revelation 11-12; Isaiah 61

Saturday – Revelation 13-14; Isaiah 62



Christians Serving in Iraq

Pray for James Woodside (Ben's cousin), Jeremy Allen, Philip Cain and Tim Martindale. Titus Cain has returned safely from Iraq; Phillip is due back next month (pray that his last month there is spent safely).

Other Involvement Opportunities

The Ladies Workshop will meet again in February. See Denise Westphal for details.

Group Meetings

Group meetings have resumed. Please check with the deacon who is leading your group.

Calendar

The young people's (13-18) class will meet right after services tonight at Steve and Donna Thompson's home.

Elders and Deacons

We have received several names of men that the congregation feels are qualified to serve as elders and/or deacons. We will be making an announcement shortly.

Adult Classes

Dennis Wade (words of the Bible) and David Byrd (Journeys of Paul) will be teaching in the auditorium on Sundays and Wednesdays. Rich Ladd will be teaching the Bible Essentials class in room 6 on both Sundays and Wednesdays; Michael Caisse and Grant Mulligan will be teaching the College Age singles class (includes HS seniors) in room 5. David Posey will teach Parenting on Wednesday night and Luke-Acts on Sunday night in room 11-12.

Evidence of Apostasy

The Religious Celebration of “Christ-mass” in churches of Christ

There is cause for concern about how some preachers and churches of Christ are handling “Christ-mas” these days. Obviously, there is much less of a militant spirit about it. In fact, there is a trend to go along with the world and celebrate it as a day to honor Christ’s birth. There are articles in journals published by our brethren that celebrate the season. There are advertisements for special dramas and concerts in local churches. There are sermons planned for today that will emphasize Jesus’ birth, with only the slightest reference, if any, to the fact that date of Jesus’ birth is unknown to us. There may be no reference to the religious and pagan origins of the day, nor other salient issues such as the fact that most Protestant churches in the 1600s banned any observance of Christmas.

The reality is that you can set foot in some local churches of Christ today and you’d never know that the church and the preacher didn’t fully endorse the setting aside of a special day to observe the birth of our Lord. There are two possible reasons for this. (1) The preacher and the church may indeed endorse the celebration of Christ’s birthday as a religious holiday, or (2) they may feel that a “hands-off, no comment” policy is best, for fear of alienating those who are visiting for the first time.

It is true that we have sometimes made the error of scolding visitors for coming to services for just one or two times a year, on “Christmas” and “Easter.” Instead, we should make them feel welcome and use these as opportunities to teach them about Jesus. I’m happy when visitors come, no matter what motivates them to come. But we must studiously avoid allowing folks to believe that we endorse “Christmas” as a valid “holy day,” to be observed religiously.

In the first place, “Christmas”— actually, “Christ Mass”—did not come from heaven, but from men. There is no mention of such a day in Scripture nor are there instructions for setting aside a special day to observe the Lord’s birth. We claim to do nothing religiously without biblical authority for it. Are our actions today consistent with that claim? If the Bible is silent (a) about the date of Jesus birth and (b) about

setting aside any day except the first day of the week are we not presumptuous when we promote such a special day?

Some say, “But the birth of Jesus is recorded in Scripture!” Yes it is, and we should study it and learn from it. But the fact that the story is told in the Bible strengthens the argument against setting aside a special day. God felt that it was fitting to record the event, but gave no instructions about the date of Christ’s birth or about honoring it. So upon what basis would we claim to do so? If we are authorized to set up that day as a special day, then we are authorized to take any event recorded in the New Testament and set up a special day for that, too (how about the day of Jesus’ baptism or death? Or a “Pentecost Sunday” or a day to honor the miracles of Jesus, or even “Ethiopian Eunuch Sunday”... you get the idea). Of course, most mainline denominations have done just that— they have a complete “liturgical” calendar that they follow throughout the year. Ironically, the calendar is so full, I foresee a time when each and every Sunday will be a “special day” with a special name. Yet Scripture makes every first day of the week special (see Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10).

Secondly, when we take a “no comment” position are we not just compromising with the world? “Christmas” is a popular time, a time when the name of Jesus crosses people’s lips more often than any other. Perhaps we’ve decided that this is a “good thing” and so we should not do anything that would disrupt this otherwise “healthy” focus on the Lord.

I submit, however, that it is neither “good” nor “healthy” for people to be deceived into thinking that commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ can be reduced to an hour or two a year, a few songs and a few platitudes about Him. Whatever “Christmas” is, it is entirely *secular*. Observing it in a religious way can cause damaging psychological effects because it may give a non-worshipping heart a sense that it has worshipped. Yet it would be purely subjective, serving only to salve the conscience and tell the heart that everything will be OK and “next Christmas I will repeat the conscience-soothing process.”

The devil must love this trend. He must love it when our preaching promotes a weak, cheap grace. How can we consciously sell people down the river like that? Don't we owe them more? We don't desire to alienate anyone but we are obligated to tell them about who Jesus really is and what commitment to

Him really means. Honest people will not be offended by the truth. Letting the time come and go without accomplishing anything more than confirming people in their error—either directly or indirectly—is neither wise nor kind.

David Posey

Just the Facts

Christmas

From "Sacred Origin of Profound Things"
by Charles Panati, p. 215-217

CHRISTMAS:
EARLIEST OBSERVANCE, FOURTH CENTURY
C.E. ("Common Era," same as "AD," dp).

WHEN OBSERVED: DECEMBER 25.
COMMEMORATES: FEAST OF THE NATIVITY;
CHRIST'S BIRTH.

The biblical narrative of Jesus' birth gives no date for the event, though it more likely occurred in spring than in winter. Saint Luke tells us that shepherds were "abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night" — shepherds guarded their flocks day and night only at lambing time, in the spring; in winter, the animals were kept in corrals, unwatched.

The idea of celebrating the Nativity on December 25 was first suggested early in the fourth century, a clever move on the part of Church fathers, who wished to eclipse the December 25 festivities of a rival pagan religion, Mithraism, that threatened the existence of Christianity.

It is important to note that for two centuries after Christ's birth, no one knew, and few people cared, exactly when he was born. Birthdays were unimportant; death days counted. Besides, Christ was divine and his natural birth was deliberately played down. In fact, the Church even announced at one point that it was sinful to contemplate observing Christ's birthday "as though He were a King Pharaoh."

On December 25, pagan Romans, still in the majority, celebrated *Natalis Solis Invicti*, "Birthday of the Invincible Sun God," Mithras. The Mithras cult originated in Persia and rooted itself in the Roman world in the first century B.C.E. (same as BC, dp). By the year 274 C.E., Mithraism was so popular with the masses that Emperor Aurelian proclaimed it the offi-

cial state religion. In the early 300s, the cult seriously threatened Christianity, and for a time, it was unclear which faith would emerge victorious.

Church fathers debated their options.

It was well known that Roman patricians and plebeians alike enjoyed festivals of a protracted nature. The Church, then, needed a December celebration.

Thus, to offer converts an occasion in which to be proudly celebratory, the Church officially recognized Christ's birth. And to offer head-on competition to the sun worshipers' popular feast, the Church located the Nativity on December 25. The mode of observance would be characteristically prayerful: a Mass; in fact, *Christ's Mass*. As one theologian wrote in the 320s: "We hold this day holy, not like the pagans because of the birth of the sun, but because of him who made it." Although centuries later, social scientists would write of the psychological power of group celebrations—the unification of ranks, the solidification of collective identity, the reinforcement of common objectives—the principle had long been intuitively obvious.

The celebration of Christmas took permanent hold in the Western world in 337, when the Roman emperor Constantine was baptized, uniting for the first time the Crown and the Church. Christianity had become the official state religion in 313. And in 354, Bishop Liberius of Rome reiterated the importance of celebrating not only Christ's death but also his birth.

Saint Francis of Assisi popularized the Christmas *crib* or *creche* in his celebration of the Nativity in Greccio, Italy, in 1223. Francis used wooden figures of Mary, Joseph, the infant, sheep and shepherds, starting a tradition still popular to this day.

The period of time leading up to Christmas—from the Sunday nearest November 30 until Christmas Eve—is known as *Advent*, Latin *adventus*, "coming," and was first celebrated in the late fourth century. At one time, Advent was observed by strict fasting, prayer, and meditation, but now it must compete with Christmas parties and shopping.

Calendar for the Folsom Point church of Christ

| December 2005 | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|---|------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | | | | 1 7 PM Elders' Meeting | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 AM & PM Bible Classes | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 AM & PM Bible Classes | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 Today Young People's Class, after PM Services, at the Thompson's home. | 19 | 20 | 21 Winter Begins 7:30 PM Bible Classes No 10 AM Class | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 5 PM Singing (no classes). | 26 | 27 | 28 PM Bible Classes No 10 AM Class | 29 | 30 | 31 |

Future Dates to Remember:

December 18th – Young People’s meeting at the Thompson’s.

January 1: New quarter begins.

June 19-23 (Tenative): Vacation Bible School

October, 2006: Gospel Meeting with Berry Kercheville

The View contains news and articles of interest to the members of the Folsom Point church of Christ. Announcing an activity or event does not necessarily imply that we financially sponsor the event or that the elders specifically endorse every component of that event, since it may not fall under the direct oversight of the elders. The church's work and the elders' oversight is limited by Scripture. We will not announce events that are primarily social in nature. However, we do want to publicize those activities that provide an opportunity for you be a more involved and active member of the body.

Editor

Published by The church of Christ

900 E. Natoma
PO Box 492
Folsom, CA 95630
916/608-4866

Elders

Randy Clark: 916/939-5066
Dan Hamilton: 916/933-3569
David Posey: 530/676-9514

Services

Sunday Morning Assembly
8:30AM & 10:15AM

Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.

*Private classes arranged at your
convenience.*

For more information,
visit our web site at:

www.folsomchurch.com