

## Beyond the Christmas Controversy

Christmas is not without controversy. Scholars debate whether December 25 is actually the birthday of Jesus. Purists criticize pagan symbols and practices in which this holiday is immersed. And the materialism of the season justifies cynicism. Yet, the actual date of birth has no bearing on anything. The pagan symbols and practices reflect the human inclination to cultivate religious traditions that have little or nothing to do with the Bible. And the materialism is sadly an expression of human greed, which ironically tends to authenticate the very event it exploits.

Beyond dates and human traditions and frailties there is a truth that remains at the center of this season that cannot be diminished or denied despite these distractions. It is the truth revealed by the angel of the Lord to some shepherds nearly 2,000 years ago: "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). Prophesied in the Old Testament, realized in the gospels, and proclaimed throughout the rest of the New Testament is the most fundamental message of Scripture: Jesus the Christ, God's anointed, is Savior and Lord. It is good news because sinners are in need of a savior delivering them from God's wrath and a Lord directing them in his will.

This celebration should not be concentrated in one day, cluttered by human traditions, and darkened by human greed. It should be a continual celebration, grounded in the pristine pages of Scripture, and memorialized in the depths of the human spirit.