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December 2015 "The Christmas Life"

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, it is amazing to me that we are rapidly approaching the end of another year. I can still remember the fear that gripped so many about the beginning of the new millennium. Internationally, people were firmly convinced that the change from 1999 to 2000 would cause computers to crash, resulting in wide-spread catastrophe, financial collapse and the failure of natural gas and electricity supply systems that would force people to live "off the land." In preparation for this "dooms-day" scenario, people spent large amounts of money to purchase supplies of oil lamps, bottled water, gasoline-powered electrical generators, pre-packaged survival foods and much more.

Not only were many Christians swept up in this near-panic of what the new century would bring, a great number of them were convinced that the return of Jesus was imminent at the moment the clock struck midnight to usher in the year 2000. They seemed to think the anti-Christ was standing in the wings, ready to take over the world.

Well, the clock struck midnight, the world passed from 1999 to 2000 and there was no international computer crash, no collapse of our resource suppliers, Jesus did not return and the identity of the anti-Christ is still unknown.

One thing that did stand out to me during that time was a heightened awareness among Christians of being ready for the Lord's return. I distinctly recall many focusing their conversations on being spiritually prepared to meet Jesus and stand in judgment before Him. What I have also noticed is that in the nearly 16 years since then, there has been a marked decrease among many Believers in their overall concern for holy living.

Over 2,000 years ago, God sent His Son Jesus to be born of a virgin in a Bethlehem manger. His birth marked the beginning of His march to the cross to die as the final sacrifice for the sins of humanity. The first thirty years of His life on earth were spent in relative obscurity; the last 3-plus years were spent as a living example of how a human with God's life could live in a fallen, corrupt, sin-ravaged world. In John 14:30, when Jesus said that the prince of this world (Satan) had nothing in Him, He was emphasizing the fact that there was no sin in His life for which He could be accused.

As Christians, we rejoice over the birth of Jesus and many celebrate December 25th to honor when He was born. But it seems most of us tend to miss the greater purpose for which Jesus was born. He absolutely was born to take away the sins of the world and through faith in Him we can be born again. However, the born again experience is not simply so we can receive forgiveness of sins and go to Heaven when we die. The born again experience is also the means by which we can be delivered from the lost, sin nature we received from Adam and receive the life and nature of God. It is by that new nature we can live on Earth as He revealed in Genesis chapters one and two.

When God created Adam, He breathed his own life and nature into him so he could live on earth with the holy, righteous nature of Almighty God. Though Adam was not created to be Deity, he did have the potential to live free from sin. But Adam chose to sin, which resulted in his spiritual death and his passing from the life and nature of God to having the sin nature.

As we study the life of Jesus revealed in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), we typically focus on the healings and miracles He performed. We study the teaching and parables He shared with the people. But one thing which is more critical than all of the healings, miracles and teachings is the fact that He lived a holy life while in a flesh body here in this world.

Quite honestly, this is the primary reason we should celebrate Christmas. Jesus was not born on earth just to be the sacrifice for our sins or so we could learn about life in the Kingdom of God, believe in Him and do His works, then go to Heaven when we die. He was born so that, after He completed His work on Earth, humanity could be restored spiritually to God's original plan; so that, through faith in Christ, we can be delivered from our lost, sin nature and receive God's breath of a holy, righteous life.

Sadly, few Christians seem to be concerned about living the way God intended. If you were to hold a week-long seminar on such subjects as walking in the power of God, how to increase financially, end-time prophecy or how to understand the deep, hidden mysteries of scripture, I have no doubt a great many people would attend. But just try holding a conference on the scriptural principles of holy living, then see how many people attend.

The Apostle Peter gives us great insight about what will happen prior to the return of Jesus:

³Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, ⁴And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

⁵For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: ⁶Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: ⁷But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

⁸But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:3-9)

The word "scoffers" in verse three comes from the Greek word "empaiktes," which appears only one other time in the Bible, in Jude 1:18, as "mockers." In the context of these passages, empaiktes is speaking of Christians who scoff or mock at what is recorded in scripture and are willingly ignorant of (or, rejecting) the unchanging standards God has given us in His Word. This is not simply about refusing to believe in

the return of Jesus. Rather, it is about scoffing at His expectation for us to be **READY** for His return.

God has told us to be holy in the same way He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). He has told us to live by His righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). We are instructed to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). In fact, contrary to what many Christians seem to believe, the central themes of the New Testament are not about receiving prosperity and walking in the miracle power of God. Instead, the primary themes in the New Testament are correcting doctrinal error and living in holiness.

When Jesus does return, He will be coming to receive a Church that is without spot, wrinkle or blemish (Ephesians 5:27); one that is holy, unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight (Colossians 1:21-22). Societies change and create laws to fit the desires of a culture. If a law is viewed as archaic and irrelevant to how a populace wants to live, then that law is removed or rewritten. However, holiness is defined by God's unchanging Word; societal law or denominational policy may accommodate the scoffing and mocking of scripture, but God and His Word will never change.

Holiness is not the opinion of a preacher. Holiness is the perfect, righteous life of God being lived by an individual who has received God's life through the born again experience. It is in scripture that our Father has made it explicitly clear what is and is not approved by Him. The only way a holy lifestyle is boring and restrictive to a Christian is if that Christian wants to live according to the world more than he wants to live according to Christ.

Living a holy life is not impossible; if it were, God would never have told us to live in that fashion. Like Adam, Christians can choose to rebel against God's standards or comply with His instructions. His life in us is the power we need to say "no" to all sin and compromise.

I truly enjoy the Christmas season. I realize many Christians think the emphasis is not on Jesus as it should be and that there is too much paganism and commercialism involved. But whether people realize it or not, if it weren't for Jesus, no one would be celebrating December 25th as the day of the birth of the Christ child. Yes, that is quite the obvious statement. But the point I'm making is that the beautiful decorations, bright lights, heart-stirring songs and joyful parties are referred to as "Christmas" decorations, "Christmas" lights, "Christmas" songs and "Christmas" parties. The exclusive, identifying term is "Christmas."

In researching the meaning of the word "Christmas" I came across several different answers. One of which is that some authorities claim it is a combination of (Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Middle English) words which mean "Christ the Messiah." Another is that it means "Christ's Mass" or, "a worship celebration of Christ." Regardless of its origin, the word "Christmas" has come to mean "the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into the world."

Yet, in a unique fashion, every time a person accepts Jesus it is Christmas all over. When we are born again, we are born of God's own Spirit. We are told in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that we are "new creatures," meaning, "a new creation which had previously never existed." The moment an individual puts his faith in Jesus to be born again, a new child

of God is born into the world. This new child has the holy life and nature of his Father, the same life and nature Jesus had when He walked through this world. This new child will never be Deity, but he has the capacity to live a holy life, just like his elder brother Jesus. How heartbreaking it is when Christians, people cleansed by the blood of Jesus, scoff and mock their salvation by denouncing the holiness of their new nature through compromise of God's truth and willingly choosing to participate in sin.

The more I know Jesus, the more I want to live the Christmas life every day. I want to be holy in all I do, with that holiness being as God defines it, not by man's religious definition. I want to be increasingly sensitive to the life of God in me and live in a way that makes Him proud. I want people to see Christ in me, and to want Christ who is in me.

This Christmas, enjoy the celebrations, enjoy the decorations and enjoy all the wonderful songs sung about our Savior. Most of all, think about your own Christmas and the life of Christ that has been given to you. May this be the merriest and most Christ-filled Christmas you have ever known!

In His Grace,



P.S. - I have a special gift for you. a CD of a special Christmas sermon I preached titled, "The Birth of a Birthright." This CD is available at no charge. To receive your very own copy, complete and mail the order form on the next page.

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Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!

The year of 2015 was one of challenges, victories and growth. Kathy and I thought we were going to make at least two major, international ministry trips, but the Holy Spirit instructed me to cancel any major travel plans. So, other than driving to minister in Canada, we did not leave the country. Later in the year we understood why the Holy Spirit had given those instructions as we faced two deaths in the family which occurred near the dates we would have been overseas.

Speaking of Canada, Kathy and I were so blessed to help celebrate the opening of a new church, Harmony Prayer Centre, in St. Thomas, Ontario. Pastor Mike O'Brien and his wife Donna are such wonderful friends and they are so hungry for God. Please remember this church in your prayers.

This past year saw an increase in the number of people visiting our web site and watching our services. I never cease to be amazed when people in other nations contact me to say they have been watching, downloading sermons and experiencing great spiritual growth as a result.

It would be easy to go on and on about how God has moved in our midst during 2015. But I want to thank each and every one of you for being a part of what the Lord is doing. Your prayers and friendship mean so much; the encouraging letters and emails you send

serve to remind me that lives around the world are being changed. We covet your continued prayers. Next year Kathy and I may be making at least three overseas ministry trips. Also, our ministry plans to take a step of faith in 2016 the likes of which we have never taken. So please continue to pray that we have the mind of Christ for everything He lays out and that all the finances necessary flow in to accomplish His will and Kingdom purpose. We love you and are so blessed to have you as a part of our lives!

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**** 2016 Spring Prayer and Power Conference ****

The conference dates are Sunday, April 24 through Friday, April 29. Our host hotel is:

Country Inn and Suites (Fairborn South)
3971 Colonel Glenn Highway
Fairborn, Ohio 45324
(937) 429-2222 Fax number is (937) 427-2204
www.countryinns.com/fairbornoh email: **cx_fabo@countryinns.com**

Discounted room rates are \$94 per night, plus tax. When you contact the hotel you **must ask** for the Grace Christian Center conference rate in order to receive the discount. Our Group Block Code is **0321GRACEC**. Many events take place in the Dayton area from March through June and hotels fill very quickly. It would be wise to make your reservations as soon as possible.

For those traveling from other countries, you should immediately begin working to obtain a passport and visa. Keep in mind that our ministry will not be providing finances for your airplane ticket, hotel room or meals. If you have any questions about the conference send them to PastorJimGCC@gmail.com.



_____ Check here to receive a CD of the Christmas sermon "The Birth of a Birthright."

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My love gift is: \$ _____ (Make checks payable to "Jim Martin Ministries.")

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