

Hearing And Understanding The Truth

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As you are well aware, we are knee-deep in the Christmas holiday season. You have probably seen some men in your neighborhood on ladders, maybe on their roof, putting up lights, an inflatable Santa, sleigh, and reindeer set possibly. Maybe on the other side of the driveway, a nativity scene. This is the Super Bowl of pagan holidays. People just cannot say no to the clip-on reindeer antlers on their car. They are excited. And why should they not be? They have waited all year to devote themselves to something.

As we go through this message, I want to shed some light on why the world cannot hear God's Word and why we need to be careful to maintain and grow our calling. Once God opens your mind to the truth, it becomes your responsibility to guard it.

A 2019 Gallup poll found that 93% of Americans celebrate Christmas or some form of it. 93%. We are definitely in the minority here. In fact, I do not believe I have ever met anyone who did not celebrate it. I have met many people that agree it is pagan but they go along to get along because it is a family tradition.

Christmas observers spend around \$1,000 each or \$4,000 for a family of four with an estimated \$1.5 trillion spent on the entire season in the US alone. Many go into debt just to save face with family and friends. The Christmas season is even starting earlier than ever. Our neighbor put up her Christmas tree and decorations on Halloween. Decorations go on sale in July at Hobby Lobby. I was informed of this. I do not shop there.

This holiday is irresistible for most people, and they truly believe they are doing the right thing.

But the world is going to have difficulty from the very start even hearing God's Word. John 6:44 says plainly that you must be called by God the

Father. I Corinthians 2:12 says we are given the Holy Spirit in order to understand God's Word.

Now, I loosely follow someone on YouTube who teaches homesteading techniques. He appears to be Christian and he even talks about the seventh day Sabbath and how he and his family keep it. He is someone that I would say I respect. However, recently he revealed that he was gearing up for Christmas. How can your mind be open to one obvious truth but not another?

II Timothy 4:4 says that people will turn away from the truth and chase after myths because they will not tolerate sound teaching. Sounds like Christmas. The general public feel like they are doing the right thing and they do not want their world worldview disrupted in any way.

Many of you know who Kent Hovind is. He has got a YouTube channel now. He is a biblical creation speaker and teacher. He has some amazing theories on the pre-Flood world and great analysis of the Bible. He is right about much of what he teaches, except that he absolutely despises the Sabbath. His mind simply will not accept it.

Let us turn to a scripture now. Matthew 13, verse 10. I am going to read seven full scriptures. We will try to get through them quick. Christ is referring to Isaiah's prophecy.

Matthew 13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'

But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

So if you are willing, seeking, and open to God, you can and will receive more understanding, but 99% of the people I meet on a day-to-day basis are closed-minded. They stare at you blankly if you mention not celebrating Christmas or observing the seventh day Sabbath.

Another scripture I will read says,

Isaiah 44:18 (NIV) They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot hear.

Now, when I was little, I would be absolutely mortified to inform someone that I did not celebrate Christmas or that I could not attend a Christmas party on the Sabbath. That is a double whammy. Now though, I quite enjoy it. I jump at the chance to notify someone of my beliefs. My poor hairdresser got an earful the other day. So for you young adults out there, own your own beliefs, be proud of them, and stand up for God when the chance comes, and it will come.

I want to give a very brief summary of how Christmas came about for the young people and as a refresher for the rest of us.

Christmas traces its origins back to ancient Rome. The Romans observed a winter festival called Saturnalia marked by gift giving and feasting near the winter solstice around December 21st.

A few hundred years later, the Germanic people contributed yuletide, adding evergreen trees and lights to overcome darkness and evil spirits. This was a 12-day celebration starting around December 20th and ending near our modern day New Year's. Yuletide marked the return of the sun. As Christianity spread through Europe, though, the Catholic Church could not stop their members from observing these pagan traditions, so they blended in the concept of the birth of Jesus Christ the Son on December 25th.

Now we have Santa Claus modeled after Odin, the god of the Norse people and Christmas lights that stem from warding off evil spirits. I remember being about 8 years old when a friend of mine told me the meaning behind those Christmas lights. So even 30 years ago, his parents knew there was no truth in it, or maybe they actually believed they were warding off evil spirits, one or the other.

I would like to read another short but powerful verse which states,

John 4:24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

God would not command you to observe something that was a lie.

Have you ever wondered how people have the energy and finances to observe such a holiday?

Now I believe we all long for a purpose. It is built into us by God. But if you are not called by God, you do not quite know how to devote yourself, or at least that is my observation. That is why they put 100% effort into this holiday. We in the church at least know we are here to learn and grow on earth, and in the Kingdom, perform our new jobs. The people of the world do not have that, so they are constantly searching for purpose—and often unconsciously. And they will find that purpose in pagan holidays, youth sports, politics, and some even in business.

I have taken quite a few potshots at the world. And I want to show that we must answer our calling and grow in it. So if you would please turn to I Timothy 4, verse 14. I am going to read through 16.

I Timothy 4:14-16 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Now, we hopefully feel that daily tug from God to make better, more Christian decisions and actions. We are also guided by God's holy days, which bring us back into alignment and give us His truth and picture His coming Kingdom. What does Christmas promise?

We are called by God to be set apart, and it is important for us to keep our distance and hold our ground, protecting our family from these holidays. We are extremely blessed to have this calling and we must protect it and grow in it.

I will read II Peter 1, verse 10 quickly. He has got some sound advice for young adults here, and adults.

II Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.

Another scripture I would like to turn to now is I John 4, verse 4. I will read 5 and 6 as well.

I John 4:4-6 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Now, I do not think any of us are tempted to run out and join some local Christmas carolers. But our kids can be. And they get pretty close to it with school parties and friendships they have. Peer pressure is a powerful thing. We have to be strong, hold the line, and tell them no, even if they resent that decision greatly. Our kids can put a lot of pressure on us to give the green light, and we have got to stay the course. Loving God should always come first.

As we begin to close here, I am going to read Hebrews chapter 2, verse 1 which says,

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

And not being firm enough with our children is where the drifting can start.

It is plain to see that there is no truth in Christmas or any worldly holiday, for that matter. There is no truth in the world. But I truly appreciate the opportunity to speak today and I hope all of you can dodge the Christmas hysteria coming in the next few weeks. Guard your kids, guard yourself. And God-willing, all of us will continue to answer the call and grow in understanding as we navigate our way through this dark world.