

# Meaning of Christmas has been topic of debate

I've heard a lot of debate lately about the meaning of Christmas. Some argue that it is a religious holiday, and people need to get back to that, to "put Christ back into Christmas."

What is the meaning of Christmas? How did it start? Are its materialistic, commercial excesses a recent development?

In his book "The Battle for Christmas," professor of history Stephen Nissenbaum wrote of Christmas celebrations 150 years ago: "Christmas ... was a time of heavy drinking when the rules that governed people's public behavior were momentarily abandoned in favor of an unrestrained carnival, a kind of December Mardi Gras."

From its beginning in the fourth century, Christmas has been surrounded by controversy. For example, there was the question of Jesus' birthday.



**sharon corcoran**

• use it or lose it

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "The date of Christ's birth is not known. The Gospels indicate neither the day nor the month."

So how was Dec. 25 chosen to celebrate his birthday?

The *New Encyclopedia Britannica* says, "Most probably the reason is that early Christians wished the date to coincide with the pagan Roman festival marking the 'birthday of the unconquered sun.'"

An article in the Dec. 24, 1991, issue of *The New York Times* quoted Simon Schama, professor of history at Harvard University: "Christmas

itself was superimposed over the ancient festivals that celebrated the winter solstice.... The early Church in Rome had a particularly hard battle against two other great pagan festivals, the week-long Saturnalia, which began Dec. 17, and the Kalends, which greeted the New Year.

"The first festival was a time of licensed misrule, often presided over by a lord of merriment, not so much Santa as fat Saturn himself, the orgiast of eating, drinking and other kinds of naughtiness.... It must have seemed helpful to have it supersede the Saturnalia.... So the rebirth of the sun became instead the birth of the Son of God."

Why would Christians adopt customs from the pagans who had persecuted them for over two and a half

centuries? Acts 20:29, 30 says, "I know that after my going away, oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves."

After the death of the apostles, a great apostasy crept into the congregations as foretold.

The result is stated in the book "Early Christianity and Paganism": "The comparatively little body of really earnest believers was lost in the great multitude of professed Christians."

Christianity, instead of being the outside group that was persecuted for its members' moral and scriptural stand, was absorbed into mainstream practices.

The book "The Paganism in Our Christianity" says, "It was a definite

Christian policy to take over the pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition, and to give them a Christian significance."

During the Middle Ages, reform-minded individuals spoke out against merrymaking excesses. Dr. Penne Restad, in her book "Christmas in America—A History," said, "Some clergy stressed that fallen humankind needed a season of abandon and excess, as long as it was carried on under the umbrella of Christian supervision."

Did this make the celebrations OK?

Paul, an apostle of Jesus, wrote to Christians living in Corinth, as recorded at 1 Corinthians 10:21: "You cannot be drinking the cup of God and the cup of demons."

Considering the words of Psalm 5:6, "You will destroy those speaking a lie," it is also ironic that so many features associated with

Christmas smack with falsehood. Think of the fairy tale of Santa Claus.

Have you ever tried to explain to a child why Santa prefers entering through a chimney instead of a door? Or how he reaches so many lands in one night with just reindeer to pull his sleigh?

When children learn that they have been deceived into believing that Santa is a real person, does that not undermine their trust in their parents?

That is out of harmony with Jesus' words at John 4:24: "God is a Spirit, and those worshipping him must worship with spirit and truth."

So, those of you who are run ragged with holiday activities, stuffed with holiday food and over-extended financially, put down the fork, put down the credit card, and remember that Christ never asked Christians to do any of this.

## Columnist refuses to let Christmas slide

Other than the weather turning a little cold, it sounded like travel would be pretty easy for this holiday. But some snow brought in a



**sally michael**

• brewster beacon

wrinkle and a "White Christmas." I think my kids are going to observe Christmas with their families, but there should be a few of them here for a day or so after Christmas. My first idea was to let the holiday slide, and that is what my natural inclination still is.

But it seems there are so many that are trying to make Christmas a non-important holiday, and I don't plan on letting them have the last word. Just a few minutes ago, there was a news item that said another school has removed any hint of Christmas from their programs.

So, in spite of events taking a toll on my life, I don't want Christ taken out of Christmas. So, to all of you, I wish you a Merry Christmas.

Coleen Crumrine had a nice early Christmas gift from her daughter Carolyn Somers. The two ladies went to Denver on Friday, Dec. 10, and spent the weekend shopping and attending the Gaither Family Christmas held at the Pepsi Center.

Coleen said it was a great experience, and she will always cherish the memory of the wonderful music and program. They also enjoyed having a meal at the Red Lobster, which is something she won't soon forget. So, Carolyn, I think you gave your mom just what she wanted.

There are many pretty decorations around town, and it is a pleasure to see the bright lights.

The Senior Center looks especially nice this year, with the handiwork of the 4-H group that decorated on the 1st. I don't know how many years they have performed this good deed for us, but it is truly appreciated.

Each year it seems to get a little more professional.

Marvin Garrett had back surgery in Denver last week, and from all reports, he is doing quite well. I imagine there are times when he

might like to argue the point, as that seems to be one of the feelings that come upon these kind of surgeries, but when it is all over, it will certainly feel like it was worth it.

Mary Ruth is glad her husband is doing well, and she may be having surgery herself in the near future.

Celebrating an early Christmas Sunday, Dec. 19, with Rod, Susan and Branson Gilley were Nic and Barbara Hoover of Hays; Carmelita and Lyle Clark and Virginia Smiley, all of Goodland; and Beth and Rick Philbrick of Kansas City.

Marla Giarratano of Phoenix dropped in to visit her mother Carmelita Clark of Goodland and friends Tanya Gray, Pam Augustine and Ladonna Dempewolf over the Christmas holiday.

The Bulldog basketball teams are going into the Christmas break with an excellent record. Both the boys team and girls team remain undefeated, so it looks like another exciting year ahead of us.

Can you believe that when the students return to school, the school year is half over? It has gone very fast, at least in my opinion.

As I said earlier, there are many news stories that are very negative to Christmas feelings, and I could give several examples, but I want to magnify the things that are happening around us show the true spirit of the time.

There are many unselfish acts that people are doing, and one of them was of a family in central Kansas that lost a mother of five to an accident a few months ago.

There are people working very hard to supply the father of the five children with a new home before Christmas. I think this is super, and it is what we should be concentrating on as the true spirit of the day. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

## State urges caution on roads

In light of past traffic fatalities during holiday times, the Kansas Department of Transportation has offered tips to help motorists to drive safely and encourages all to access the department's information on road conditions.

The department said motorists should allow extra time to reach their destinations in anticipation of heavy traffic volume during the holiday season, and in northwest Kansas, snow will also impact driving conditions.

"The holidays are a festive and joyous time of the year," said Deb Miller, secretary of the department, "but that doesn't mean taking a vacation from your driving responsibilities."

"It is critical motorists recognize the potential traffic dangers and work to avoid them for a safe trip."

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, she said, 15 people lost their lives on Kansas roadways, and last year between Christmas and New Year's, five people were killed in vehicle crashes.

The department urges motorists to drive cautiously, so there is not a repeat of the Thanksgiving numbers over the Christmas holiday.

"Many people will be traveling this holiday season, and we want them to arrive safe and sound," Miller said.

Two of the most important things that motorists can do, she said, is never drink and drive and always make sure everyone is buckled up. Adults should use their safety belts, and all children should be placed in the back seat in age-appropriate safety seats.

Other tips to enhance safety while you are traveling include:

- Leave early for your destination to avoid frustration and speed-related collisions.
- Be attentive to your driving and avoid distractions.
- Observe posted speed limits.
- Be alert for changing weather conditions.

The department offers information about winter road conditions by either the phone or the Internet.

By calling "511" on any phone (landline or wireless) within the state of Kansas, travelers can get route-specific road conditions and weather and road closure information 24 hours per day.

Callers outside the state or anyone having difficulty connecting to 511 can call 1-866-511-KDOT to access Kansas 511.

Road condition information is available on the Internet at <http://511.ksdot.org> which displays Kanroad, the department's road condition and travel information map.

## Worship warms the heart



### Calvary Gospel Church

**Pastor:** Rev. Steve Rains  
Fourth & College • 899-3605  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Morning Service: 10:30 am  
Small Group Ministries  
**Wednesday:** Prayer and Worship: 7:00 p.m.  
Youth @ the Rock House: 7:00 p.m.

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help

**Pastor:** Father Norbert Dlabal  
307 W. 13th • 890-7205  
**Sacrament of Reconciliation:**  
4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment  
**Mass Schedule:**  
Saturday: 6 pm, Sunday: 10:30 am  
**Spanish Mass:**  
1st & 3rd Sunday: 4 pm

### Sonrise Christian Church

Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398  
**Minister:**  
**Youth Minister:**  
**Sunday:** Worship Service: 9:30 am  
Sunday School: 10:45 am  
**Wednesday:**  
Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm  
Adult & Children's Classes: 7 pm

### Word of Life

**Joursquare Church**  
10th & Clark • 899-5250  
**Pastor:** John Coumerilh  
**Service Schedule:**  
**Sunday:** Worship Celebration  
and Kids' Church: 10:30 am  
First Wednesday: K.W.A.M.!  
Grades 1 through 5: 7 p.m.

### Pleasant Home Church

Serving the rural community  
for over 100 years  
Rt. 1, Box 180 • 694-2807 • 3190 Road 70  
**Pastor:** Charlie Busch  
694-2242  
**Sunday:** Worship Service: 9 am  
Sunday School: 10 am  
Evening Service: 6 pm

### Bible Baptist Church

**Pastor:** Glenn Hermanson  
Fifth & Broadway  
890-7368  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9 am  
Morning Service: 10 am  
Evening Service: 6:30 pm  
**Wednesday:** Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

### Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO  
(719) 346-7984  
**Sacrament Meeting:** 10 am  
**Sunday School:** 11:15 am  
**Priesthood/Relief Society:** 12 am

### Iglesia Del Dios Vivo

La Luz Del Mundo  
Spanish Speaking Church  
**Minister:** Esteban Ortiz B.  
1601 Texas • 899-5275  
**Daily Prayer:** Sunday thru  
Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10 am

### United Methodist Church

**Brewster:**  
**Pastor:**  
Worship Service: 10:45 am CST  
Sunday School: 9:45 am CST  
**Winona:**  
**Minister:** Rev. Bob Winters  
Worship Service: 9 am CST  
Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

### First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**Pastor:** John Park Winkler  
Eighth & Arcade • 890-5233  
**Sunday:** Worship Service: 10:30 am  
**Sunday School:** 9:15 a.m.  
**Activities:** Junior High & High School Youth Groups,  
Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men's and Women's Groups,  
Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship  
**Special Notice:** Handicap Accessible, Hearing  
Assistance Equipment and Infant and Toddler  
Nurseries Available

### Kanorado United Methodist Church

**Pastor:** Leonard Cox  
399-2468  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9 am  
Worship Service: 10:15 am

### Church of the Nazarene

**Pastor:** Bob Willis  
Third & Caldwell  
899-2080 or 899-3797  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:45 am  
Worship Service: 10:50 am  
Evening Service: 6 pm  
**Wednesday:** Evening Service: 7 pm

### First United Methodist Church

1116 Sherman  
899-3631  
**Pastor:** Rev. Janet Hernandez  
**Saturday:** Informal Worship: 5:30 pm  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Worship Service: 10:30 am

### Goodland Bible Church

109 Willow Road • 899-6400  
**Pastor:** Chad DeJong  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:30 am  
Morning Worship: 10:45 am  
Evening Worship: 6 pm  
**Wednesday:** AWANA (Winter)  
and prayer: 7 p.m.

### First Baptist Church

**Pastor:** John Meckling  
Fifth & Center • 890-3450  
**Sunday:** Sunday School for all ages:  
9:15 am (Child care provided)  
Morning Worship: 10:30 am  
**Wednesday:** Bible study 7 p.m.  
Call church for information  
**Thursday:** Bible study 9:30 a.m.  
Wheatridge Center

### St. Paul's Episcopal Church

13th & Center  
Church 890-2115 or Rectory 890-6969  
**Priest:** Father Hal Lycett  
**Holy Eucharist:** 10:00 a.m. Sunday  
10:00 a.m. Thursday  
**Morning Prayer:** 8:00 a.m. Wed. - Sun.  
For emergencies Wed. - Sun. 890-6969  
Sr. Warden for emergencies  
Mon. and Tues. 890-3320

### Grace Fellowship Church

104 E. Hwy 24 • 890-6423  
**Pastor:**  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10 am  
Worship Service: 11 am

### Seventh Day Adventist Church

1160 Cattletrail  
**Pastor:** Jim Martin  
**Saturday:** Sabbath School: 9:30 am  
Worship Service: 11 am

### Emmanuel Lutheran Church

13th & Sherman • 890-6161  
**Pastor:** Scott Grimshaw  
**Sunday:** Christian education/fellowship:  
10:15 a.m.  
Worship Service: 9 am  
**Wednesday:** Confirmation: 6 pm

### Church of Christ

401 Caldwell  
890-6185  
**Sunday:** Bible Study: 9:45 am  
Worship Service: 10:45 am  
**Wednesday:** Bible Study: 7 pm

**The following sponsors urge YOU to attend your chosen House of Worship this Sabbath:**

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### Atens Department Store

1103 Main

### Good Samaritan Center

208 W. 2nd

### KLOE/KKCS/KWGB

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