

# WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ALL ABOUT

# CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT WORSHIP HEBREWS 1:6

But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

There is a New Orleans native, Greg Livaudais, who has a Christmas card collection of over 7,400 cards.

Greg has cards dating from 1864 to the present.

And he hosts a Facebook page for Christmas card collectors with over a thousand members... Apparently, a lot of people take Christmas card collecting seriously.

That's why I hope you're holding on to your Calvary Chapel Christmas cards. World famous graphic artist, Pastor Matt Houston, has designed our own line of cards. In years to come they're sure to be collectibles.

You've already gotten the first two Calvary originals. [Christmas is about Connections](#) and [Christmas is about Family](#). Well, tonight, we debut our third card.

With the sheet music in the foreground, and the Christmas tree in the background, this card's emphasis is obvious... [Christmas is definitely about Worship](#).

Joseph, Mary, Mary's cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth's husband Zacharias, the angels on the outskirts of Bethlehem, the shepherds who heard them, the wise men who came later - everyone in the story except Herod and the priests responded to the first Christmas with awe and wonder. [Christmas is about Worship](#).

This evening I want to begin by making four simple statements; then I'll elaborate on each: Christmas is about Worship... Christmas is about Giving... Worship is about Giving... Giving is about Worship... (repeat)

Here's my first statement, Christmas is about worship. In Hebrews 1:6 we're told, "When He (ie God the Father) again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

Throughout the NT Jesus Christ is known as God's "firstborn" - and not because He was the oldest in His family. Actually, the biblical use of the term has nothing to do with birth order. It was a title of family privilege.

The firstborn was the father's heir. Under the father, the firstborn of the family was in charge. He had special prerogatives, responsibilities, and authority. Thus, Jesus is firstborn, or head of all God's creation.

And according to the writer of Hebrews when He entered the world He did so to the worship of angels.

Now, you and I are very familiar with what happened on that first Christmas, outside Bethlehem. In the cold night air over the shepherd's fields; suddenly, the dark sky glowed. It was illuminated with the glory of God.

The curtain between the spiritual and the physical, the barrier between heaven and earth, was lifted. And a choir of angels serenaded stunned shepherds.

Luke files this report of what went down, "Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising

God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'"

I've always pictured a heavenly riser - maybe ten rows deep - filled with an angelic choir. A couple hundred voices - perhaps a thousand - appear to these shepherds to worship God at the birth of the Savior.

I figured God did what some colleges do when basketball season rolls around. Rather than suit up the entire marching band, they substitute an ensemble - a few horns, a couple of drummers, a tuba or two...

It's a skeleton crew that plays the fight song at times, but a full band and a halftime show isn't needed. That's what I always thought happened that first Christmas. God dispatched the heavenly pep band to Bethlehem.

But that's not what we learn in Hebrews 1:6. Let's read this verse again, very carefully, "When He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Catch the key word?...

On that first Christmas - the day Jesus entered the world - how many angels worshipped? The answer is "All" - every single angel throughout God's vast creation lifted up their praise. That's a lot of angels...

There are a couple of passages that try to quantify the number of the angels for us... Hebrews 12:22 makes this statement, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels."

Heaven is full of so many angels you can't count them all. Heaven's angelic population is "innumerable."

In Revelation 5:11 John sees God's throne in Heaven. "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

Here, John is carried to heaven, and he's trying to number the angels enthralled in the worship of God...

But he gives up as soon as he starts. He begins with a rough estimate, "ten thousand times ten thousand."

But it's obvious that's too small of a number, so he throws in "and thousands of thousands..." That's another way of saying, "There's too many to count."

On the first Christmas a mere "multitude" of angels were on-location at the birthplace, praising God. But the scene in Bethlehem was just the tip of the iceberg.

At the same time the angelic choir made their announcement to the shepherds, hordes of angels stationed in distant galaxies all across the universe turned their attention back toward planet Earth, and worshipped God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ!

On the first Christmas a call went out, not just across the shepherds' fields of Bethlehem, but throughout all the angelic ranks and to outposts all across creation...

“All hands on deck, it’s time to worship!”

The writer of Hebrews recites the actual declaration. It was a PO - not a purchase order, but a praise order. It heralded, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

Here’s what we know for sure... not a single angel anywhere angels dwell kept silent that day! Every angel under God’s domain worshipped the Savior who was born in Bethlehem. Christmas is about worship!

And not just the angel’s praise was impressive. I love Mary’s Song in Luke 1 - it’s called her “Magnificat.”

Shortly after being told by the angel that she had been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit - and a child had been conceived in her womb - Mary went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. There she composed a song of praise, and poured out her soul to God in worship...

Luke 1:46 records her words, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior..."

Her soul “magnified” God... This is a great definition of worship or praise - worship is spiritual magnification.

To worship is to amplify God’s glory and grace.

Worship sees God through the telescope, instead of just the naked eye. It’s the admiration of God for all that He is. Worship is God under magnification.

Worship is like me putting on my glasses...

God’s glory becomes clearer. Details that were obscure come into focus. The haziness is dispelled.

At times my vision of God gets distant and feels foreign. My appreciation of who He is and what He does gets diluted. In the midst of the immediate and tangible, I lose focus on a God who's eternal and spiritual. My awareness of God is hindered by a haze.

It always amazes me that on a foggy day I can drive down Stone Mountain Freeway and not even see the huge chunk of granite. An object as colossal as the mountain becomes hidden. Pour enough moisture into the atmosphere and even a mountain can disappear.

And pour enough doubt, and fear, and worry, and lust, and envy into a heart and that person's perception of God dissipates. There's a near-zero visibility.

Yet worship is the perfect antidote. [Praise cuts through the haze](#). It refocuses our vision on God.

Worship highlights the Lord's graces and attributes.

It brings the God from whom we've drifted, back into proportion. He becomes bigger than we allowed Him to be. Worship rips off the limitations, and uproots the boundaries we imposed on God's might and mercy.

After a season of worship, a limitless God, once again fills up our minds, and dominates our outlook, and commands our heart, and stimulates our soul...

And Christmas is about the moods of worship...

Remember the shepherds who witnessed the angel's testimony... Luke 2:20 tells us, ["Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them."](#)



One of the beauties of Christmas is its ability to surprise us all over again. It quickens or creates a spark. It reignites a Christian's faith. Christmas fans the flame of faith. If God is willing to join our predicament, there's got to be hope! Impossibilities are possible.

Christmas quickens us, but it also quiets us. The mystery of it - that a holy God would dive into our evil world. The God who's bigger than the universe would make Himself small... the infinite became an infant.

Remember the post-partem Mary... After the angelic visitations - after the birth - after the shepherds... when she had time to think it all through, it's written, "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."

What a combination... Christmas quickened the shepherds to praise the Lord, but it quieted Mary so that she could ponder these things in her heart.

These are the moods of Christmas - praise and ponder, marvel and meditation - it conjures up both!

This is why I say, the angels, Mary, the shepherds - all teach us, Christmas is about Worship – but here's my second statement, Christmas is about Giving.

Granted, this would seem to be self-evident. Who in America doesn't realize that Christmas is about giving?

Here's some interesting statistics, "Every Christmas Americans use over 28 million rolls of wrapping paper, and almost 17 million packages of tags and bows. And all the presents go under 35 million Christmas trees."

And guess where I got those statistics? Interestingly, they appeared in an issue of “[Garbage Magazine](#)” - a trade publication for garbage collectors. Witness a Christmas morning around the family tree, and the pile of garbage that’s accumulated unwrapping gifts - and it reminds us of the obvious, [Christmas is about giving](#).

Did you hear of the lady who was in such a rush to send out her Christmas cards, she grabbed a box off the shelf without even reading the message inside.

Several days after sending the hundred or so cards in the box she picked up a leftover, and checked out the message she’d sent. She was horrified to read, “[This card is just to say... a little gift is on the way.](#)” For a lot of people Christmas is all about those little gifts.

I read of a couple that live in Anthon, Iowa. Richard and Donna Hamann certainly understand the giving spirit associated with the Christmas season. Anthon is a farming town of 650 people. Rich is a retired farmer.

One Christmas, the Hamann’s gave a most unusual gift. They paid the November electric bill for everyone in their town. The bills totaled \$25,000 and they were due on December 25. The week after Christmas a mound of thank-you cards covered Richard’s desk.

His giving-spirit had touched a whole town.

When asked why he did it, Richard was quoted in USA Today, “[The Lord has been very good to us and so have the people of this community, so I always thought we ought to be](#)



doing something in return if we could." Richard understands Christmas is about Giving.

Isaiah 9:6 is a favorite Christmas passage, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given..." Jesus was a child born to Mary, but He's also a gift given by God. Christmas is the celebration of God's great gift!

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Jesus is the greatest gift anyone has every given! Christmas is about Giving!

But let me make a third statement. Not only is Christmas about giving, but Worship is about Giving.

True worship is the giving to God of my attention and my affection. It's the bestowing of honor, and the extension of praise. Worship is the giving of myself, and what I possess - to a God who is worthy of it all.

Giving back to God from what He's given to us is the heart of real worship. Whether it's our money, time, talent, love, respect... worship acknowledges that all blessing comes from God, and should end up glorifying God. Worship is the completion of the circle. You're not a serious worshipper if you don't have a giving spirit...

As we mentioned earlier, Christmas is about worship and giving, but we don't often put those two together.

We worship on Christmas Eve, and we give gifts on Christmas Morning - but worship and giving are really one in the same... Real worship is about giving...

Remember throughout the NT we are rewarded for our labors on earth with crowns in heaven. But there's a special purpose for those crowns. In Revelation 4:10 John is before God's throne when he sees 24 elders.

These are faithful leaders in the church so you would expect them to have a few crowns - a few rewards - but it's interesting what they do with their crowns...

John watched these elders, "fall down before Him who sits on the throne and (they) worship Him who lives forever and ever, and (they) cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

Here's the lesson for us...These elders worship God by laying their crowns before His feet. They give back to God what He had given to them... You need to listen to your elders! Worship is about giving. Worship is the ultimate reason we serve our Lord!

And I hope you're trying to rack up as many rewards as possible... I sure am! I don't want to finally get to Heaven and get caught empty-handed. I don't want to stand before my Lord Jesus with nothing to give Him.

Imagine arriving on the heavenly shore. It's more wonderful than you could've imagined in your wildest dreams... You look into the face of your Savior. You see the scars in His hands, feet, face. You're overwhelmed with love and appreciation for all that Jesus did for you.

And there you are - reduced to tears - you're a pile of melted gratitude... And out of the corner of your eye you notice the elders laying down their crowns...

And you think, "Yea, I'll give Him my crowns."

But what if you have NO crowns! While on earth you did nothing for Jesus that He could reward. What a sad, empty feeling to come up blank at that moment...

To have nothing with which to thank Jesus! This would be the ultimate embarrassment and frustration.

Several years ago, prior to Christmas, my brother and I agreed not to exchange gifts. Well, we give each other piddly stuff anyway. Why not save the money.

But apparently his wife didn't get the message. On Christmas Day she hands me my present - and I had nothing with which to reciprocate. I felt like such a heel!

And that was just my brother. He's the one who should've felt like a heel. But if I felt that way before my kid brother, imagine how you'll feel before King Jesus!

Never forget, biblical worship is giving back to God, some of what He's given to you. It's all about giving...

The wise men understood this... when they reach Jerusalem and inquire into the whereabouts of the promised Deliverer, they tell King Herod, "For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." Notice their intention... it was to worship Him!

Yet remember how they did it when they arrived in Bethlehem... Matthew 2:11 tells us, "And when they had

come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

They see - they fall down - they worship - and they give gifts. The natural outgrowth of their worship was a giving spirit. How could they visit God's chosen, and linger in the presence of royalty, without giving a gift?

Make no mistake about it, [Worship is about giving.](#)

But here's my final statement, and here's the twist I've been leading up to... [Giving is about Worship.](#)

Even though you might not realize it, our propensity to get caught up in the gift-giving at Christmas time is partly the result of our latent desire to worship God.

I believe the madness of Black Friday - consumerism on steroids - the temporary insanity that overwhelms normally sane people, and causes them to frantically dash around town just to buy cheap stuff is really a dim reflection of a deeper desire - [a longing to worship.](#)

This is why I'm not against folks shopping and giving gifts at Christmas. Christmas trees are a grand idea!

As a matter of fact, there's a recent trend I hope catches on, upside-down Christmas trees. The Home Depot online store has several varieties you can order. It's perfect for people who live in cramped quarters, and want to conserve floor space to stack more presents. And who isn't for more presents?

I say turn your tree upside down if it allows you to house more gifts. I like exchanging gifts. For our gift giving at Christmas is a faint echo of God's gift to us.

I'm sure some folks give gifts to show-off, or impress others, or one-up the other guy... but aside from these lesser motivations, what's really wrong with people taking their hard earned cash and acting unselfish?

Why not buy gifts that bring joy to other people? Giving is an activity in which most folks participate, that gets us closer to worship, for [worship is about giving!](#)

I don't recoil from the Christmas season or even worry a lot about its crass commercialism. I take a different approach. I dig for the deeper meaning that lies just below the surface of all the gifts and giving...

When Charlie Brown couldn't get into the Christmas spirit, his buddy, Linus, asked him what was wrong...

Charlie Brown told him, ["The season is getting me down. There's too much commercialism, no one is sincere, and there is just too much rushing around!"](#)

Linus takes his friend to task, ["Charlie Brown, you're the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem."](#)

There are Christians who act just like Charlie Brown... Enjoy the Christmas season and its festivities, just don't divorce the rituals from their real significance.

CS Lewis once made the observation that early in a child's life he can love Santa Claus, and reindeer, and elves, and

new toys, and gingerbread houses... and the baby Jesus in the manger... all simultaneously. All these images cause no conflict in a child's mind.

But when he or she gets old enough to recognize the factualness of the one and the fantasy of the other, at that point, the child decides what takes precedent.

If he puts the historical first he can still appreciate the imaginary aspects of the season... But if he puts the playful aspects first - to the exclusion and neglect of Christ, the festive aspects soon lose their luster.

Lewis wrote, "The person will have taken on an independent, and therefore a soon withering life." Realize, everything in your life that you treat independent of Jesus will soon wither and lose vitality

This is why Christmas should be a winsome holiday. It needs to be chalked full of wonder and wistfulness.

Yet remove Jesus Christ from its center and focus - and all the gifts you give, and the cheer you spread - won't bring you one slither of lasting happiness.

It's when we recall that all our gifts are a reflection of God's greatest gift - when our holiday cheer is an extension of our worship of God - that's when every gift, given and received, becomes something sacred.

It's been said, "He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find Christmas under a tree."

Ten days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a group of citizens in North Platte, Nebraska, heard a rumor that their



own sons, soldiers from North Platte, would travel through town on a troop train, on their way westward.

Five hundred citizens from North Platte turned out at the train depot with gifts of gratitude for their own Nebraska boys as they headed to the Pacific to defend their country... But when the train pulled into town, it wasn't Nebraska soldiers onboard. The troops on the train were from the Kansas National Guard.

When the townsfolk realized the mix up, there was an awkward moment or two - until one woman handed a young man she'd never met the gift she'd bought for her own son. The other citizens followed her example.

There were hugs, and prayers, and love shared all around that day. The encounter in the depot was a spontaneous act of genuine love that touched both the soldiers from Kansas and the citizens of Nebraska.

But here's the lesson, the people of North Platte thought the gifts they had brought to the depot that day were for their own sons, yet in the aftermath of such a moving moment, nobody could argue that all along God must've intended those gifts for someone else.

Actually, the townsfolk honored their own sons, by blessing the boys from another state. This is what we should be doing when we exchange Christmas gifts!

A few hours from now, you'll be camped around your tree with the people you love. In those few magical moments when the gifts - and the love that prompted them - are opened and enjoyed... I hope it hits you... **All this gift giving is really about somebody else!**

God gave a gift so wonderful that it defined love, and in a sense has prompted all gifts since. The joy we relish around the Christmas tree is the joy God wants us to experience every day when we worship Him.

It's true, **Giving is about worship**. What is worship, but opening a gift from God, then giving a gift to God?

Think about it, anytime we worship Jesus we gather around a tree - another tree - the tree on Mount Calvary - the old rugged cross... and its a tree adorned with lights! For when I come to that tree I see the light of love, of righteousness, of justice, of mercy, of peace, of grace! That dull and rugged cross is a colorful tree!

And there are gifts there too... There are gifts under that tree... The Savior has gifts for you... pardon and power - forgiveness and freedom - peace, and joy, and life, and wisdom, and love... Oh, lots and lots of love!

And before the bloodstained tree at Calvary, you'll want to give a gift to the Savior who hung there for you.

The problem at Christmas time is not all the shopping and gift-giving that occurs... **Giving is really about worship**. It's a reminder of something deeper.

But it's when we miss the meaning of the giving, when we see the sign, but refuse to head in the direction to which it's pointing - then all the gifts, and parties, and decorations, and cheer we can muster will only leave us empty. Christmas ends up a hollow time.

This is why scores of people suffer from Christmas letdown! It's not because they've gotten caught up in the wrong things - it's because they haven't drawn the right conclusions. They've failed to see that **giving gifts to people we love is really about worshipping God.**

Here are four statements I hope you remember:

**Christmas is about Worship...**

**Christmas is about Giving...**

**Worship is about Giving...**

**And Giving is about Worship...**

Let's worship Jesus Christ all throughout this holiday season, both as we extoll our praise and as we exchange our gifts. Truly, **Christmas is about worship!**