



The January 2012 Meltdown?

By Barbara L. Klika, MSW

Personal Life Coach

Undershepherd

www.set-apart-ministries.org

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We have entered the long dreaded year. The spectrum of possible catastrophes boggles our minds...if we give them any thought. Recently I saw information about several "visions" of what people think will come on the earth this year; nearly entire continents submerged, resulting in small islands. The scenario of worldwide economic collapse and the reasons for activation of the FEMA relocation camps around the country are feared.

Some will choose to believe that all is as it should be and that all things will continue as they always have...once we just get over these problems. Some will try to profit in it, building their personal kingdoms. Some may panic and experience great despair or try to move out of the country.

Coupled with all of that, is the usual January depression, or post-holiday let-down, experienced by many. Maybe you know about it? The once-a-year-magnanimity of charitable giving gives way to the usual life and cold of winter. High hopes and expectations of family gatherings may have been dashed on the shores of troubled relationships with unresolved issues. The financial stress as payment for impulse buying of the previous months looms.

The annual intention to celebrate the birth of Messiah always has these repercussions. How many times have you seen the "Keep Christ in Christmas" signs? How many admonitions to remember the "Reason for the Season?" When I still celebrated Christmas, I wrote about this in the late 90's, seeing the irony in that first century compared to today. Then, among those who did recognize Him were also those who rejected the Baby grown to be our Savior and Suffering Servant, because they wanted a King to immediately conquer all the world's problems, compared to those in **our** times who are content to wax nostalgic about the Baby in the manger yet show no interest in the Scriptural Truth that He is coming

back soon as our Conquering King, and will indeed carry out the judgment of all that is wickedness in this world. It hasn't changed much in over a decade. **If this truly were a central celebration of faith, why would so many Believers, not just those "in the world," need to be admonished to honor Him in it?** Doesn't seem anyone needs encouragement to keep the "Santa" story going, decorate or party.

Why deal with this annual issue now in the face of anticipated calamities?

It is important as spiritual preparation to be able to stand through whatever our Father allows to actually happen. We want to be among the elect who are not deceived; all of our lives, mind, will and emotions to be so firmly grounded in our Messiah Yeshua/Jesus of Nazareth that we will not be shaken, even when everything else that is not eternal does shake!

Years ago, I was quite surprised to find that **the celebration of Christmas does not go back in an unbroken line to the first century believers. It has been a cherished time for me so when I began to explore my expression of faith more deeply, I had to question why we do what we do if it doesn't go back to the beginning?** I know...many people may stop reading right here because they think, Jehovah's Witness groups don't observe Christmas and they are a "cult," so anyone who raises questions about it must be suspect. (*Jude DID urge us to earnestly contend for the faith given once for all to the saints, yes?*) Though the story of the birth of Messiah is told in the Scriptures, the exact date is not given, and it is certainly never called "Christmas." Even in Israel it is too cold in December for shepherds to have their flocks out by night.

Perhaps this is by design. Have you ever done a word study on "birthday" celebrations in Scripture? There are only 3 recorded. None have very positive connotations! John the Baptizer and Herod's chief baker lost their heads on Herod's and Pharaoh's birthdays. Job's children died at what appears to be a birthday gathering, too. There is no Scriptural directive to celebrate Messiah's birth in our month of December.

Simple research will clearly show that Christmas has a checkered history. Many of the earliest arrivals in the New World Colonies forbade the celebration! Opinions differ as to the reasons various traditions so familiar today became associated with the birth of Messiah but when each one is researched, their pagan roots become evident. One will find no evidence of any of these customs in Scripture, unless it is to forbid them! Those of us who have grown up seeing it as a joyful celebration of the Advent of Messiah have **NOT** intended to be involved in anything that He would disapprove of! The argument is sure to arise that it has been sanctified; the meaning changed by the church so those other meanings no longer apply. The similarity with the celebrations of other pagan "gods" at the same time is brushed off as unimportant. But is that Truth? **These practices have been assimilated into Christian religious practice and have competed with the intent to focus on Messiah.** Whose authority do I then accept? The reasoning of man that it is all for good intentions, or the Word of God that says we are not to do as the followers of other "gods" practice?

"Why wouldn't you want to celebrate His Birth, even if it isn't in the Scriptures?" I choose, to the best of my current understanding, to honor the ways that my God, Who Is the God of Israel, laid out in His Word. He gave them for us to celebrate Him! His Birth *is* included in the Scriptures: among the Fall Feast

celebrations. It is a wonderful time of joy! All of these Feasts are not just “Jewish” as has been customary to believe, but in fact beautiful eternal in-depth pictures of our Messiah, His first Advent as the Suffering Servant and His soon return as our Conquering King!

In this way, I am keeping as close as I can to God’s plan and instructions so that I will not be shaken. Even if—WHEN-- the whole world is shaken. Who is your refuge?

it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:...

Isaiah 28:15b

O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and [things] wherein [there is] no profit. Jeremiah 16:19