

NEWS AND VIEWS  
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full  
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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*Can you believe it's almost Christmas??* This question can often express two extreme reactions depending upon the attitude of the person asking the question. For example, consider some children as every day gets closer to Christmas Day. Gleeful excitement and anticipation of the day's arrival robs them of their sleep. Or when the mind wanders in the days approaching Christmas vacation many of their teachers can testify that it's not that they aren't focused... The focus is on something else. Education is overcome by elation. Their joy is real. You can hear it in the way they ask the question... *Can you believe it's almost Christmas??*

Then there are those who ask the question with an inflection that sounds more like Eeyore, you know the stuffed donkey that lives in the House at Pooh Corner in the Hundred Acre Wood. Can you hear him in your mind dragging out the question... *Can you believe it's almost Christmas??* You should see my face when I'm speaking in Eeyore... it's enough to depress the most anxious among us!

What I'm trying to say is that evaluating these two approaches to *Christmas Time's A Coming* brings me to the conclusion that the key to how we react to the Christmas season is truly a matter of time. Maybe you haven't lost that sense of wonder that most children experience when it comes to Christmas. But you are probably in the minority. Most of us begin to wake up to the fact sometime around mid-October that Christmas is coming... *and we are not ready!!!*

Suddenly we are aware that the passing of time seems to speed up week by week and then it's after Thanksgiving... and Black Friday turns into Blue Monday when we think we are running out of time! Not time to celebrate, or meditate in the meaning of Christmas, but the time required of us to enter into what our culture has bent and shaped Christmas into becoming. *(I think we have helped with that, by the way)* What gift are we to go out and get to give to this person or that one? Even if we participate in cyber shopping and seemingly save some time, the season can still become something it shouldn't. Burdensome. Did you ever think that the giving of a gift can become a burden? Uh-oh... think I've hit a nerve. Some of us have not only thought that in the past... we are living it in real time. Maybe we're carrying around the wrong burden.

My thinking about this subject this year has brought about a revelation to me. Not a new one but one that has been there for quite some time... long before my time... in fact soon after time had begun with the first children born into this world.

Consider the following word from the Lord:

*So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. (Genesis 4:3-5)*

So which one of these two brought a gift to God that didn't matter much... and which one had a *real* burden that mattered a lot? Which one was willing to give a gift that was really costly and which one got angry about what God thought about his gift? Which one truly had the burden of giving? Consider the true motivation for the burden of a gift worth giving.

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

Loving while giving will give us the right burden of giving and the right reason for living. Having the right burden of giving can change all of our life this year... even our lifestyles... slow down... love more... love the joy... love your God... love one another. Thank Him for His burden.

Merry Christmas Blessings,  
Pastor Sam