



# Truth Matters

*A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters*

Scripture Reading  
Week of  
December 25<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup>



Monday

- ❖ Zechariah 5, 6
- ❖ Revelation 18

Tuesday

- ❖ Zechariah 7, 8
- ❖ Revelation 19

Wednesday

- ❖ Zechariah 9, 10
- ❖ Revelation 20

Thursday

- ❖ Zechariah 11, 12
- ❖ Revelation 21

Friday

- ❖ Zechariah 13, 14
- ❖ Revelation 22

Saturday

- ❖ Malachi 1, 2

Sunday

- ❖ Malachi 3, 4

## What About Santa?

Author Unknown<sup>1</sup>

Who is Santa Claus? Is he a myth or some figment of the human imagination? Is Santa a cruel lie foisted on the young and gullible? Could he be, as some have suggested, even Satan himself with the letter "N" simply moved over three spaces to the right. Look at the word Santa. Move the "N" over three spaces. It spells SATAN!

In this article I want to help you adequately respond when your children or grandchildren ask, "Is Santa Claus for real?"

### The Faithful Bishop from Myra

Let's begin our study by establishing the reality of Santa Claus. During the fourth century, a young man by the name of Nicholas lived in the country of Myra (modern-day Turkey). He was reared by Christian parents who faithfully taught him the Bible. Nicholas particularly enjoyed hearing stories about Jesus. When his mother told him how Jesus healed the sick, cared for the needy and performed miracles, he found himself wishing Jesus were still on earth. Later, he discovered the Church, Christ's body on earth, is responsible for carrying on His mission.

During his teen years, his wealthy parents died, leaving Nicholas a great fortune. With time on his hands, he often attended church services, seeking God's will for his life. A few weeks later the local bishop also died. Finding a replacement for the respected clergyman would be a difficult assignment. One night, the head of the church council was told in a dream to stand by the front door of the church the next morning, and ask each entering person his name. The first person responding, "Nicholas", was to be appointed the new bishop.

You can imagine young Nicholas' surprise when confronted by the church official. After much consideration, he accepted the appointment as Bishop of Myra around 300 AD

Bishop Nicholas was a staunch defender of God's Word. When the Arian heresy (which denied the deity of Jesus Christ) raised its ugly head, Nicholas strongly opposed it. Because of this bold stance for Christ, he was imprisoned by Diocletian, the evil Roman emperor. He was not released until Constantine became emperor. According to tradition, Nicholas was a participant in the Council of Nicea (325 AD), the stalwart body who gave us the Nicene Creed.

Early in his ministry, Bishop Nicholas learned the importance of a faith that works. This faith motivated all the bishop's actions. He personally felt responsible for meeting the needs of his parish, and dedicated his enormous wealth to this end. At times, he disguised himself and secretly visited the homes of the most needy. Under the cloak of darkness, he delivered food, clothing and money. The recipients had no idea where the blessings

<sup>1</sup> The author is unknown because I cannot recall where I received this article. It was taken from a scholarly theological journal where the church historian had verified every fact contained in this article. You can do the same.

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originated. As far as they were concerned, the Lord had answered their prayers and met their needs.

The story of a nobleman's three daughters perhaps best illustrates the magnitude of Nicholas' generosity. Having lost his entire fortune, a nobleman was left without means of paying his daughters' dowry. This gift was customarily given by a father to help the couple begin their marriage. Without an adequate dowry, a young lady could not find a respectable mate. One daughter decided to sell herself into slavery to provide a dowry for her sisters. When Nicholas heard of the predicament, he secretly went to the noblemen's house at night and threw in a bag of gold. At a later date, he tossed in a second bag. When it came time for the third daughter to be married, the nobleman was determined to discover the identity of his secret benefactor. He tied a string around the circumference of the house, attaching several bells. When the culprit approached the house, his foot would touch the string and ring the bells. He would be caught in the act! Sure enough, Nicholas was apprehended. The embarrassed bishop made the father promise he would not tell the secret. The father's vow was short-lived. Word spread quickly throughout Myra that Bishop Nicholas was responsible for the hundreds of good deeds performed over the years.

Nicholas began teaching others the blessings of secret giving (Matthew 6:1-4). As a result, many

learned how greatly God uses those not seeking personal recognition. Upon his death, some citizens of Myra picked up where Nicholas left off. They secretly began meeting the deepest needs of hurting souls, desiring no credit for their benevolent actions. When the recipients asked who provided the gifts, their neighbors merrily replied, "Saint Nicholas must have brought them!" The practice of secret giving brought great joy to the people of Myra.

Italian sailors, whose ships frequently docked in Myra, took the story and teachings of Saint Nicholas back to their homeland. Before long, the practice of secret giving had spread throughout the Western world. Wherever the story of Nicholas was told, a spark of generosity was ignited within the hearts of the listeners. Many began giving in secret.

When the customs of Nicholas filtered into Germany, the old saint's name was translated Saint Nicklaus. From Germany, the story of Saint Nicklaus was carried into Holland. In the Dutch language, his name became Sinter Klaus. The Hollanders brought the traditions of the ancient bishop to the New World. They settled in New Amsterdam (modern-day New York City). Thus, Saint Nick burst onto the American scene in the early 1600s. In the English language, Sinter Klaus became Santa Claus.

### America's Own Theologian of Christmas

Dr. Clement C. Moore was the distinguished professor of Greek and Hebrew at General Theological Seminary in New

York City. America was less than 50 years old. Moore's father, a famous Episcopal bishop, administered the first oath of office to President George Washington. He also comforted Alexander Hamilton as he lay dying from a bullet wound inflicted by Aaron Burr. Dr. C.C. Moore, however, would not be remembered for his father's meritorious accomplishments, nor for his own scholarly writings...and there were many. His greatest legacy would be a short, rhyming composition penned in less than one hour on Christmas Eve, 1822. Here is the amazing story:

Mrs. Moore had been packing Christmas baskets for poor families when she realized she was one turkey short! "Clement," she asked in an urgent tone, "will you run down to the market for me? I need a few more items." With the snow falling briskly and the spirit of Christmas in the air, off he went. Upon returning home, Moore met his Dutch caretaker, Jan Duychinck, a short stubby man with a bowed mouth, a big red nose, two perfectly placed dimples, and a pipe clenched between his teeth, causing the smoke to encircle his head. The moon's bright light shone upon the blanket of newly fallen snow. These two men, both possessing child-like hearts, talked about Christmas, particularly the Dutch customs. The caretaker shared with Dr. Moore the fascinating story of Saint Nicholas. He mentioned how Hollanders pulled a sleigh-driven statue of the saint along a parade route. The children line the street anxiously awaiting its arrival. Someone dressed in red and white,

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like the saint, walked alongside passing out gifts. Dr. Moore could hardly wait to get into the house, grab his quill pen, and begin writing those familiar words:

'Twas the night before  
Christmas, when all through the  
house  
Not a creature was stirring, not  
even a mouse;  
The stockings were hung by the  
chimney with care,  
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon  
would be there.

When Moore began describing the old saint, he drew a word picture of his Dutch caretaker:

His eyes - how they twinkled!  
his dimples how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his  
nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn  
up like a bow,  
And the beard on his chin was as  
white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight  
in his teeth,  
And the smoke it encircled his  
head like a wreath;  
He had a broad face and a little  
round belly,  
That shook when he laughed,  
like a bowlfull of jelly.

From Dr. Clement C. Moore's poetic portrayal of Saint Nicholas, we get our present-day picture of Santa.

While a lot of myth surrounds jolly old Santa, he was a real person. This godly Bishop of Myra learned the joy of giving in secret. He was a Bible-believing soldier of the Cross who paid dearly for his convictions. The Eastern church proclaimed him a "saint" in the late fifth century. Upon his death, he

went to be with the Savior he faithfully served.

Each Christmas morning when parents selflessly give presents to their children, the story of Saint Nicholas lives on! When asked, "Mommy, who brought these gifts?", she gleefully responds, "It must have been St. Nick!"

### What Should You Tell Your Children/Grandchildren about Santa?

Every year, I tell my three sons this same story. As toddlers they understood the story in very concrete terms. (Small children cannot think abstractly or conceptually.) With each passing Christmas season, they began understanding the story a little bit more. One year, Andrew, my five-year old, asked, "Daddy, do reindeer fly?" I responded, "Have you ever seen one fly?" "No." "Neither have I. That's just part of Dr. Moore's poem," I assured him.

On another occasion he asked, "How does Saint Nicholas come from heaven to bring us our gifts?" "He doesn't," I said. "Then who brings the gifts?" "Oh, that's a secret," I whispered. I reminded him that after Nicholas' death, the people of Myra assumed the practice of secret giving. "It's the same today." He was satisfied with the answer.

Eventually, all three children, by the ages of six or seven, were able to grasp the deeper meaning of the Saint Nicholas story. At first, they understood the story in a child-like way...concretely. The Apostle Paul wrote, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man (mature), I

put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11). Similarly, there came a day when my children were able to comprehend the meaning behind the symbols. The symbols are not important, but the truths they represent.

I was able to help my children understand the principle of secret giving without ever telling them a lie. I simply told them the true story of Saint Nicholas each year, honestly, but wisely, answering their questions. They were able to make a transition from the concrete to the conceptual without difficulty.

In the years ahead, I am sure my boys will continue the tradition of telling the story of St. Nick to their kids. Today's youths are tomorrow's adults. As each generation advances into adulthood, it becomes the custodian of Christmas. Let's give our children healthy traditions they can pass on to their children and grandchildren.