

## **PUT CHRIST BACK INTO XMAS**

*[Carols by Candlelight, Chelmsford 2013]*

The other day I visited an American atheist web-site on which Christmas was featured.  
To my absolute amazement I read:

*“There is nothing odd or difficult about having a Christmas without Christ or God.... Jesus is not the reason for the season.... Christians are attempting to claim ownership of and priority over the entire holiday season, not just Christmas”. The article ends: “To put it simply, Christians who insist that Jesus is the reason for the season and that Christ needs to be “put back” into Christmas are seeking to assert their cultural superiority over everyone else. It’s yet one more example of attempts to reassert [Christian privilege](#) in an America that has moved on to religious pluralism”.*

What utter rubbish. What total nonsense!

How dare these militant atheists try and take Christmas away from Christians.

Yes, of course, there are aspects of Christmas which we observe which are not specifically Christian – kissing under mistletoe, eating chocolate Yule logs, dressing Christmas trees, has nothing really to do with the birth of Christ..

But these things are peripheral – they are not central to Christmas.

The very word ‘Christmas’ means ‘Christ’s festival.’

In the words of the slogan we have adopted for our Christmas publicity this year, ‘Christmas makes no sense without Christ’.

Christmas is first and foremost a celebration of Christ’s coming into the world for our salvation.

So let’s not wish one another ‘season’s greetings’

And let’s not even wish one another ‘Happy Xmas’

Let’s wish one another ‘Happy Christmas’.

Let’s put Christ back into Christmas

All this causes me to reflect on the trend to replace the word ‘Christmas’ with the word ‘Xmas’ - and I confess I am sometimes as guilty as others.

Even in a sermon I will type out ‘Xmas’ rather than Christmas

Why is this so?

### **1. NO TIME**

We abbreviate ‘Christmas’ to ‘Xmas’ because it's quicker.

That's true of abbreviations in general. We don't always have time to write out words in full.

This is especially true if you are taking notes of a lesson at school or of a lecture at university.

There you are writing like mad - the only way to keep up with the teacher is to abbreviate.

Sadly many people no longer have time for Jesus at Christmas.

Christmas is an incredibly busy time - right up until 25th there are so many things to do.

- There is the pudding to make - the cards to send - then the presents to buy - and the tree to decorate.

- Finally there is the turkey to cook. In our house we don't really begin to relax on Xmas Day until we have seen the Queen - up until then it's all a mad rush.

The danger with being so busy at Xmas is that we have no time for the Christ of Christmas. We have no time to think about the babe of Bethlehem, no time to wonder at his coming. This evening by coming to church I believe that you have begun to make time for Jesus. My plea to you is to use the time profitably. To use this evening to reflect on this Jesus whose festival we celebrate.

## **2. NO ROOM**

Another reason why we use abbreviations is because there is no room to write out the word in full. For instance, if you are wording an advertisement you think of ways of reducing your message.

The advantage of 'Xmas' over against Christmas is that the word-count reduces down from 11 to 4 letters. That can make a difference.

Some people not only have no room to write out 'Christmas' - they have no room in their lives for the person whose birth we are celebrating..

They are a bit like the innkeeper in the Christmas story - he had no room in his inn for Mary and Joseph and their newborn baby.

Actually he could have had room – he could have got rid of some of his guests.

Had an important person like Herod arrived, I am sure that he would have found room - but Mary, Joseph and Jesus: they just weren't important enough.

In a similar way many people today have no room for Jesus in their lives.

They have too many other concerns to take care of. For some it is their work, for others it is their family, for yet others its sport or some other interest.

Jesus does not seem important enough to displace these other interests.

But supposing Jesus is who he claims he is - God's Son, the Saviour of the world?

How crazy it is to have no room for such a person.

Yes, undoubtedly by making room for Jesus, our lives will have to change - we can't carry on as we are and have Jesus too.

But for heaven's sake, let's get our priorities right.

## **3. MEANING NOT KNOWN**

Perhaps another reason why some people use Xmas rather than Christmas is that for them Christmas has no real meaning.

Christmas is for them a celebration of the unknown.

I find it very apt that in mathematics the term "X" stands for an unknown quantity.

For many that sums up Christmas. It is simply an excuse for parties, for drinking, and for having a good time generally.

But what are we celebrating? What is Christmas all about?

Hopefully our service this evening has given the answer.

- Christmas is about the coming of Jesus, God's Son, into our world.
- "**You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins**", said the angel to Joseph.
- Jesus is the Saviour, who through his Cross and Resurrection has broken the vicious spiral of sin and death.
- Jesus brings meaning and hope to our world. In the words of our final carol, he brings "joy" to the world.

Let me be personal. Jesus wants to bring meaning and hope to your world.

He wants you to experience the joy that comes from sins forgiven, and the assurance of a life to come. He wants you to experience Christmas, and not Xmas.

My prayer is that you will make time for Jesus, make room for him even if it means radically changing priorities in your life - and in this way discover the true meaning of Christmas.

Let's put Christ back into Xmas!