

I. Introduction: Professing Christians make Jesus like Santa.

II. Jesus is not merely a mythological figure.

- A. Santa is a perfect hero for a postmodern culture.**
 - 1. What matters is not what Saint Nicholas was really like in history, or whether the stories are true, but who he is to them now and how they experience him.**
 - 2. People can make Santa whatever they want him to be.**
 - 3. The supernatural element of Santa is not connected to reality, but is a fantasy for people to enjoy.**

- B. Some try to turn Jesus into a legendary figure whose story evolves over time.**
 - 1. As in the case of Santa most admit there probably was a historical person named Jesus, but what He was really like doesn't matter.**
 - 2. People can make of Him whatever they wish.**
 - 3. Jesus' miracles, like Santa's, are seen as pre-scientific legends.**
 - 4. Many claim to have an experience of Jesus detached from His historic reality.**

- C. The coming of Jesus is rooted in history.**
 - 1. God has revealed Himself to humanity in space and time. Heb. 1:1-3 John 1:1-18**
 - 2. The prophets of the Old Testament predicted the details of Jesus' coming many centuries before His birth. Gen. 3:15 Isa. 7:14 9:6 Mic. 5:2**
 - 3. Jesus fulfilled these in every detail. Luke 24:27 Mt. 1:23**

- D. The historical events, including the miracles, of Jesus' life are essential to His message, His identity, and His work. I Co. 15:3ff**
 - 1. He was born of a virgin descended from David. Mt. 1:1ff Lu. 1:26ff 3:23ff Ro. 1:3**
 - 2. He lived a perfect sinless life. II Co. 5:21 Heb. 4:15 I Pe. 1:18-19**
 - 3. He authenticated His identity and ministry through many miracles. Acts 2:22 Mt. 11:5 Luke 4:16-21**
 - 4. He died on the cross for the sins of His people. I Pe. 3:18**
 - 5. On the third day He rose from the dead. I Co. 15:3ff Ro. 1:4**
 - 6. He has ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven from where He intercedes for His people. Acts 1:9ff Heb. 7:25 Ro. 8:34**

III. Jesus does not reward us according to our goodness.

- A. In Santa's economy good children (people) receive good gifts.**

- B. Many professing Christians believe that God gives salvation to good people, or at least to those who sincerely try their best to be good.**

- C. Jesus came into the world, not to celebrate human goodness, but to deliver His people from their sin. Mt. 1:21 John 1:29 I Tim. 1:15**
 - 1. None of us is good enough to earn God's approval. Ro. 3:20 Isa. 53:6**
 - 2. Nor is doing the best we can good enough. Ro. 3:23 Isa. 64:6 Phil. 3:4-11**
 - 3. God's holy justice demands that sin be punished. Ro. 6:23**
 - 4. You must admit yourself to be a needy sinner before you can be rescued by Jesus. Mt. 9:13 Mark 2:17.**
 - 5. People don't like to be called sinners, which is one reason Jesus was rejected and crucified. John 3:19**

- D. Jesus is able to rescue sinners like us because of Who He is and what He did.
 - 1. Jesus is fully God. John 1:1ff Heb. 1:1ff Col. 2:9.
 - 2. At the incarnation God the Son became a man. John 1:14 Heb. 2:14-15,17
 - 3. Jesus paid the ultimate price to ransom us from our sin and guilt. Mark 10:45
- 4. God's gift of salvation in Christ is completely undeserved. We can only receive it by humble faith. Phil. 3:9

IV. Jesus' best gifts are not material and worldly.

- A. Santa fits very well into our materialistic culture.
 - 1. For most, Christmas is focused upon earthly gifts.
 - 2. For some the cost of the gift is a measure of love.
- B. Some Christian teachers claim that Jesus makes his followers rich in material things. I Tim. 6:3-10 Mark 8:34ff
- C. Material gifts have many shortcomings. Ecc. 2
- D. God's best gift is everlasting life in Christ.
 - 1. Jesus did not come merely to add to our comforts in this life.
 - 2. Salvation is the gift we truly needed more than anything else. Eph. 2:1-3
 - 3. The cost of this gift is a measure of God's love for us. John 3:16 I Jo. 4:10
 - 4. God's gift can only be received by the empty hands of faith. Eph. 2:8-9
 - 5. We can never repay God for this greatest, most expensive gift.
- E. God's gift is not so much about the here and now, but it is for eternity. John 18:36
 - 1. In this life we enjoy spiritual blessings of peace and joy, but we also suffer trials and tribulations. Rom. 5:1 Mark 8:34ff
 - 2. The peace He brings us now is not earthly or political, but spiritual.
 - 3. The full experience of God's gift in Christ is in the life to come. Phil. 3:20-21
- F. Does this mean that we must remove everything earthly from Christmas?

V. Conclusion: Jesus is not one of many options. He is unique.

- A. Santa is one of many such mythical figures.
- B. Our pluralistic culture embraces the idea that there are many forms of spirituality, none of which can be said to be better or more true than the other.
- C. Jesus is the only way to God. John 14:6 Acts 4:12
- D. God offers His gift of His Son to you today. John 3:16

Discussion questions:

1. In what ways do many turn Jesus into what they want Him to be, rather than Who He is?
2. Why does the historicity of Jesus' virgin birth, His miracles, and His resurrection matter?
3. How would you answer someone who thinks God gives salvation to good people?
4. Why did Jesus come into the world?
5. Why is the materialistic celebration of Christmas a distortion of the true message of the incarnation?
6. What would you say to someone who claims that Jesus is one of many ways to God?
7. Should Christians even celebrate Christmas?
If so, how? Can we have gifts, trees, and Santa?

