



**WAS “JOLLY OL’  
ST. NICHOLAS”  
REALLY A  
SAINT? WAS HE  
JOLLY?**

To answer the first question, one must know if he was a true born-again Christian. For Paul writes *“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:”* I Corinthians 1:2

We are all saints. Of course, it is important to know what a “saint” is. The word is ἅγιοις (hagiaios). The verb means to “set apart” or “to consecrate.” Certain people are set apart because they have done something special. You and I are set apart because we did something special - we accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior and thus God has imputed the “sainthood” to us. More on that later.

Was he jolly? Well, “jolly” is an old word, as old as St. Nicholas himself. Today, we would use words like “Joyous,” “Blessed,” “Cheerful,” or “Rejoice.” Paul writes, *So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.* Galatians 3:9

and James writes, *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.*

James 5:13

And, again, Paul writes, *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*

I Thessalonians 2:19

So, I guess if St. Nicholas was a born-again Christian, he must really have been a “jolly” person, just as you and I, in Christ should be.

The question I didn’t ask at the beginning is “Was there really such a person?” Yes! He was the 4th century bishop of Myra, a city in Lycia, a province of Asia Minor (Western Turkey). God worked many miracles through him, and his love for children and his charity for the poor became legendary during the Christmas season.

If the name of the place sounds familiar, read Acts 27:5 *And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.* Paul passed through the place but, as far as we know, did not minister there. Someone must have been there because there was a church there and, by the 4<sup>th</sup> century, a saint by the name of Nicholas lived there.

What about his “Christmas Presents?” The best known story about St. Nicholas concerns his charity toward a poor man who was unable to provide dowries (amount of money or property) for his three daughters which was a requirement for them to get married. Rather than see them forced into a life of prostitution, St. Nicholas secretly went to his home in the middle of the night and tossed bags of gold through the poor man's window on three separate occasions, thus enabling the daughters to be married. The Myra Christians kept the memory of their beloved Bishop alive after his death by leaving surprise gifts for their children during the night before his anniversary.

What about Santa Claus? Well, the Roman Church says (and I quote), *“Though reverence for the saints has been de-emphasized, neglected, despised, and even forbidden within Protestantism, the memory of Saint Nicholas could not be repressed. He emerged in the popular culture as Santa Claus, Saint Nick, Sinter Klaus, and other names.”* On the contrary, the Protestant Church has not “neglected, despised or even forbidden” sainthood. Indeed, we recognize that all believing Christians are saints. We have all be set apart for the work of the ministry, called to be saints.

To learn more about St. Nicholas, go to :

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/7175/stnich-lk.html>

Next week I might consider whether or not Rudolph really had a shinny red nose but, so far, I have found no Scriptures to support this conclusion!

Wayne

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