

Christmas: Truth, Tradition, and the Biblical Witness

Introduction: Why This Subject Matters

Every year, millions of people around the world observe Christmas. It is often described as a Christian celebration marking the birth of Jesus Christ. Churches hold special services, families exchange gifts, and society speaks of a “Christmas spirit” of peace and goodwill.

Yet an important question must be asked: **Is Christmas a practice taught by Scripture, or is it a tradition added later by men?**

For believers who desire to follow Christ faithfully, this is not a small matter. The Bible teaches that God’s people must test all things by the Word of God—not by custom, emotion, or popularity.

The purpose of this teaching is not to attack people or judge motives. Many sincere people love God and participate in Christmas without understanding its origins. Rather, this study seeks to examine the subject carefully and biblically, so that faith may rest on truth rather than tradition.

Scripture Above Tradition

Jesus repeatedly warned about the danger of religious tradition replacing obedience to God. He rebuked those who elevated man-made tradition above God’s commandments. Matthew recorded Jesus’ words in Matthew 15:6–9:

“And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

True Christianity is not built on what is familiar or widely accepted, but on what God has spoken. Luke recorded the testimony of the Bereans in Acts 17:11:

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

When a religious practice cannot be found in Scripture, believers must pause and ask whether it is truly of God.

Is Christmas Commanded in the Bible?

One of the most basic observations is that the word “Christmas” does not appear in the Bible. There is no command, example, or instruction given by Christ or His apostles to observe His birth as a yearly festival.

After the resurrection, the apostles preached the gospel centered upon Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Paul summarized the gospel message in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”

The early church was built upon this message—not upon a yearly celebration of Christ’s birth.

Why the Date of December 25 Matters

Many assume that December 25 is the actual birthday of Jesus. Scripture gives no date for His birth. The Bible is silent on the exact time, and early Christians did not agree on a date because none was known.

Luke gives a detail about the season when he wrote of shepherds watching flocks by night. Luke recorded this in Luke 2:8:

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”

If God had intended believers to celebrate Christ’s birth as an annual holy day, He would have revealed the date and the manner of observance plainly.

The Focus of God’s Plan: Death and Resurrection

Scripture consistently places emphasis on the death of Christ rather than His birth. Jesus Himself established a memorial, not for His birth, but for His death. Luke recorded Jesus’ words in Luke 22:19:

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.”

The apostles preached the cross, not the cradle. Paul declared what he would glory in, in Galatians 6:14:

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Without the death and resurrection, the birth of Christ would have no saving power. The manger points forward to the cross, and the cross is where redemption was accomplished.

The Spirit Behind Religious Observance

The Bible teaches that every religious practice carries a spirit, and believers are commanded to test spiritual influences. John gave this command in 1 John 4:1:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

The so-called “Christmas spirit” is often produced by atmosphere, music, decoration, sentiment, and social pressure. By contrast, Scripture describes the true nature of God’s kingdom in Romans 14:17:

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

What is popular and highly esteemed in the eyes of men is not automatically pleasing to God. Jesus warned about this in Luke 16:15:

“And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

Customs and Their Origins

Many customs associated with Christmas are defended as harmless or symbolic. Yet Scripture warns that the customs of the people can be vain, and God’s people are instructed not to learn the way of the heathen. Jeremiah recorded God’s warning in Jeremiah 10:2–3:

“Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.”

Throughout history, religious systems have often taken practices from the nations and given them religious names, while the forms themselves remain rooted in older worship patterns.

The Problem of Religious Mixture

Mixture has always been dangerous for God’s people. In the Old Testament, Israel repeatedly fell into trouble by mixing the worship of the true God with the practices of surrounding nations.

In the New Testament, believers are called to come out of spiritual Babylon. John recorded God's call in Revelation 18:4:

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Separation is not pride. It is faithfulness—worshiping God as He has revealed Himself, rather than according to popular religion.

The Birth of Christ: What the Bible Really Shows

While Scripture does not command an annual celebration of Christ's birth, it clearly reveals what His birth meant. Luke recorded the angel's message in Luke 2:10–11:

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

The shepherds responded with obedience and testimony, not ritual. Luke recorded their response in Luke 2:17–20:

"And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

They did not establish a yearly feast day. They proclaimed what God had done and glorified Him.

Seeing More Than a Baby in a Manger

Those who truly understand the birth of Christ see more than a baby. They see God manifested in the flesh. John declared this truth in John 1:14:

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

That child would grow, fulfill His mission, and lay down His life for sinners. To stop at the manger without going to the cross is to miss the purpose of His coming.

How Believers Honour Christ Today

If Scripture does not command Christmas observance, how do believers honour Christ? Jesus defined love for Him as obedience. John recorded His words in John 14:15:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Believers honour Him by living holy lives, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. Paul wrote this in Titus 2:11-12:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”

Believers honour Him by proclaiming the gospel, making known that a Saviour has come and that salvation is available now.

Walking in Light With Wisdom and Grace

Walking in truth requires courage. God warned His people not to follow the crowd into wrongdoing. Moses recorded this instruction in Exodus 23:2:

“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:”

Truth must also be held with firmness. Paul gave this command in Ephesians 5:11:

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Not everyone sees truth at the same time, but truth must be lived before it can be understood.

Conclusion: Choosing Faithfulness Over Tradition

The question of Christmas ultimately comes down to authority: **Will believers allow Scripture alone to shape their worship, or will they accept traditions because they are familiar and emotional?**

God's Word is sufficient. When believers choose obedience over tradition, they find clarity, freedom, and deeper fellowship with Christ.

God is not seeking religious atmosphere. He is seeking worship in spirit and in truth. Jesus declared this in John 4:24:

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”