

## What the Bible Teaches About Christmas

December 25<sup>th</sup> is quickly approaching. What does God's word teach about Christmas?

Christmas will be here before we know it and another year will soon be gone. Christmas means different things to different people. For children, Christmas is typically a time of great joy and excitement related to opening presents and getting a break from school. For families, Christmas is typically a time to get together with relatives to visit and overeat. For retail businesses, Christmas is typically a time to have their highest sales for the year. For those who have recently lost loved ones, Christmas is often a time where good memories of the past lead to discouragement (tragically, suicide rates are generally higher during the holidays because of feelings of loneliness). For most religious groups in America, Christmas is a time where a special service is held to honor the birth of Jesus Christ. For some who claim to be Christians, Christmas is one of the few times each year they meet with others for worship.

Every year there are several who ask me: "When is your special Christmas service going to be?" Most who proclaim to be followers of Jesus hold December 25<sup>th</sup> in high esteem as a special day. But, as those who are endeavoring to be guided by the Scriptures in all things, we must ask the question: What does the Bible teach about Christmas?

Let's start with the explicit teaching. What does the Bible teach about Christmas **explicitly**? The answer: absolutely nothing! The Bible doesn't say anything directly about Christmas. But, we can still address the subject and see what the Bible says about it **implicitly**. Just because the term Christmas isn't in the bible doesn't mean God's word doesn't have principles that are relevant to the subject. Let's begin with...

### THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

The word "Christmas" is derived from the proper name "Christ," and the addition, "mass," a rite or commemorative ceremony. Thus, the word "Christmas" originally signified a ceremony regarding Christ; and, in the minds of many, the celebration of His birth date, thought by such to be on December 25<sup>th</sup>. It is of significance that this word was not coined until the 11<sup>th</sup> century – a thousand years after our Lord came to earth.

The observance of Christmas, as a **religious holiday**, did not originate in the apostolic age and is without divine sanction. As a matter of fact, it is not possible to determine in what month or on what day the Savior was born. God tells us through the Bible that His Scriptures will thoroughly equip us for every good work (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16,17). **If God wanted Christians to celebrate the birth of His Son in a special fashion, He would have equipped us for that task through the Bible.** In other words, He would have given us an example or precept to follow. But, the Bible does not do that. So, we do not keep it as a religious holiday.

As a side note, the Bible does give us example and instruction pertaining to remembering Jesus **death** (i.e., the Lord's Supper memorial). Had the Lord wanted His birth celebrated in a special way, the Holy Spirit would have included some instructions in the New Testament for us. The **silence** of the New Testament on the matter is significant. So, ultimately, the origin of Christmas as a religious holiday is **man-made** and without divine authority. It is important to keep this truth in mind.

Do you know why the date December 25<sup>th</sup> was chosen? Julius Africanus popularized the idea that Jesus was born on December 25<sup>th</sup> in his reference book written in 221 AD based on the assumption that Jesus died on March 25<sup>th</sup>. It was a traditional Jewish belief that prophets died on the same date as their conception. If Jesus was conceived on March 25<sup>th</sup>, then He was born nine months later (assuming a gestation period lasting exactly nine months). Obviously, this "evidence" is not convincing at all to the modern mind.

My personal view of Christmas is similar to how I view Thanksgiving, they both are non-religious holidays. Christmas is one of my favorite holidays. I know the idea of an annual observance is foreign to the Scriptures. As Christians we should give thanks for our numerous blessings **and** praise God for Christ's birth **continually**. If He had not been born, He could not have died to atone for the sins of the world! I'm grateful that at least once a year people think about Jesus' birth. My prayer is that people will do more than just think about His birth once a year. May they submit to His rule and be citizens of His Kingdom.

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