

THE PRACTICE OF CELEBRATING "CHRISTMAS"

I do not want to give any offence nor do I want to take any offense. I want to love and live in peace with all men. I generally want to accept what other men do without forcing my will upon them, even if I disagree with them. I want to bless and never curse. I want to daily give thanks for the Good News of God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. But there is something I would like to say about the practice of celebrating "Christmas"...

There is no mention of the word "Christmas" in Scripture. There is no mention in Scripture of believers engaging in a practice of celebrating the "birth day" of Jesus, or giving gifts in celebration of this event. All aspects of the life of Jesus are mentioned in Scripture. All aspects of the life of Jesus are given so we can learn about the amazing Gospel of Jesus Christ. I do not believe God sent Jesus Christ into the world intending that men should establish an annual religious practice of emphasizing the day of His birth. Jesus did not come into the world to be born; or to make a way for men to enter the world. Jesus came to make a way for men to exit this fallen world and be with Him where He and the Father are. How I thank the Father for sending His Son into the world as "Savior of the world" to call men to be "twice-born", turn from sin, and know Him personally. Knowing God, and knowing the demonstration of God's love in Jesus, is the most precious treasure one could ever know. The daily life of each New Creature in Christ Jesus is a Living Letter and celebration and extension of all aspects of the life that Jesus Christ lived on this earth.

I have found that the practice of the celebration of "Christmas" is not prescribed by God, and it continues to this day un-prescribed. It is a man-made thing. It was never in the heart of God for the "twice-born" to cherish an annual magical day. There is no magical day. There is no holy night. There is a supernatural God who transcends human history. And God is looking for those who will worship Him from the inside-out in "spirit and in truth", in newness of life, not in "once-a-year" outside-in rituals (John 4.20,24).

I realize that many things are not mentioned at all in the Scripture (i.e. cars, microwave ovens, Velcro, etc.). Here, I am not talking about "things", I am talking about "practices". And specifically, I am talking about essential practices given by God which one might expect to find universally in the Church of Jesus Christ, cherished in the hearts of God's Children. It is essential for all Christians everywhere to understand that the practice of celebrating "Christmas" is a *made up* practice and not a religious or spiritual sanction from God. The practice of "Christmas" does not dictate an ethical choice. Many things, such as the practice of celebrating "Christmas", are not commanded, forbidden, alluded to, or mentioned by name in the Scripture. Thus, the man-made nature is revealed. The idea that somewhere in history God subsequently revealed the corporate practice of "Christmas" to the Church as a supplement to the Gospel of Jesus Christ seems contradictory to both Scriptural and spiritual precedent. In terms of our "standing" or "spiritual condition" in the eyes of God, "Christmas" adds nothing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for those who practice it. And those who do not practice it lose no good thing by abstaining from the practice.

What about evangelism to the world? Isn't "Christmas" an annual unified proclamation to the world and heavenly realms that God sent Jesus? Christ lived on earth for 33 years and did not emphasize or employ the use of the celebration of His birth as a tool for evangelism. Neither did the early Church. No revival has taken place around the practice of "Christmas". Unbelievers gain no benefit toward repentance and rebirth through the practice of celebrating "Christmas". Employing "Christmas" to "win over" unbelievers is to win them over to "Christmas", which, as mentioned earlier, gains them nothing; and may very well disillusion them when they come to learn the true nature of the "practice" vs. the daily suffering of the Cross of Christ. In a best case scenario, let's say someone comes to believe in Christ by observing someone's devotion to Christ through the celebration of "Christmas". This newborn believer will eventually come to the realization that the practice of celebrating "Christmas" (the advertisement on the door, so to speak) was a lure, was not substantive, did not come from God, and adds nothing to his salvation. We might as well uniformly practice the wearing of bright orange Gospel advertisements on our clothes and hope that wins the world over to Christ. But it will not. Only the Father can draw men to Jesus. New Creatures in Christ Jesus, re-born after death on the Cross, are God's demonstration to the world of all aspects of the Good News of Jesus Christ; not celebratory "practices" or "non-practices" (Gal. 6.15). The message of the Cross appears to the world as foolishness. Somehow, the practice of "Christmas" does not.

God is no respecter of persons or practices. He is in need of nothing from men. His work is accomplished through the work of His Son Jesus.

"The God who made the world, and all things in it, this One being Lord of Heaven and of earth, does not dwell in handmade temples, nor is served by the hands of men, as having need of anything." (Acts 17.24,25)

I think God is offended to hear people walking about taking His name in vain, swearing, drunken, selfish, and disrespectful while at the same time setting up mangers and lighted trees, giving gifts, lying to children about fictional magical characters, and engaging in a man-centered, "feel good" celebration of "Christmas". Each year people feel good about expending huge amounts of time, energy and money to ensure that the poor and lonely have a "merry Christmas". Yet poor people live in poverty every day of the year. Lonely people are lonely every day of the year. The unsaved are unsaved every day of the year. The hollowness of this practice is heart breaking.

Colossians 2.16,17 says that we should not allow anyone to establish the credibility of our faith in eating or drinking, in respect of a feast, or the new moon, or of a Sabbath, which are shadows, but the substance/reality is Christ. Jesus Christ Himself is real every day. He is living with & in those who have suffered the Cross of Christ. God does not seek man-made religious practices "about Him" to prove His existence among us. God seeks Christ Himself; daily exchanged life of Christ. Christ emerging as the Life of those who are born-again. Jesus is the Father's daily love and emphasis. Man-made religious practices distract and cheapen the precious reality of Jesus living in us.

Jesus is the Bread of Life and He taught us to pray for our daily bread. Jesus is given every day to those who come to count Him dear. He walked amidst rejection those who emphasized religious traditions, but the true joy set before Jesus was the dear love of His Father.

How I long for each of us to cling to God Himself as essential and pursue the joy of God's favor... every day of the year. Knowing Him and daily becoming like Him as we pass through the world as New Creatures in Christ Jesus ... toward the likeness of Jesus in us, the Father's Beloved and dear One.

"But God forbid that I should glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a New Creation. As many as walk according to this rule, *peace* and *mercy* upon them, and upon the Israel of God." -- The Apostle Paul, Galatians 6.14,15

This is peace on earth and good will to men (i.e. mercy).

Some have come to love "Christmas" and are *greatly* angered and saddened by the thought of losing it. If you are saddened by the loss of "Christmas", consider that God wants only good things for your life and wants you to lack no good thing but to have life to the full. The fruits of the Spirit of God are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5.22). Against these fruits there is no law or external constraint/compulsion. Have your fill of the goodness and joy of God. As a child I too loved "Christmas". I sat on the lap of Santa Claus and asked for presents. One year Santa called me on the phone in my home and I was thrilled. I watched (and even recorded) television shows about Rudolf and Frosty and Charlie Brown. I lay under the tree with the family cat and stare up at the lights while the cat would swat the silver strands of tinsel. I loved having a tree, ornaments, lights, decorations, presents, a stocking, etc. I would barely sleep the night before "Christmas day" in anticipation of presents and celebration and food and family. Please do not think that I sensed no sadness at the discovery of the unsanctioned nature of the practice of celebrating "Christmas". It was a very difficult revelation. Yet "Christmas" is one of the things that I count loss for the sake of knowing Christ:

"But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." Philippians 3,8

I have not lost (I refuse to lose!) precious family, precious friends, thanksgiving, celebration, praise, giving or joy. All of these things are of God. But *man-made religious practices* are not of God and that which is not of God must not masquerade as though it is. To do so is a lie, and no lie is of God.

As for me, I elevate myself above no one and count myself better than no one. In me, that is in my flesh, there is no good thing. I have no special revelation or abilities to

hear from God (Proverbs 30.2). I am nothing. I am a maggot in the carcass of a dead dog and deserve no part in "so Great a Salvation". I stand in awe of God's mercy! Some may read this and say I am judging and looking down on others. Some may say I am a lunatic and a scrooge, and have a "bad feeling" about me and the things I am saying. Others may sense a spirit of joy, and freedom, and a calling to turn away from philosophies and practices of the world; to turn away from the practice of establishing practices on behalf of God (Deuteronomy 20.16-18). I offer this to you in humility with no strings attached. Keep or toss. I personally ask nothing from you. I love you and share with you the burden of my heart. If I am wrong, at least I believe myself to be sincere; not having attained, but desiring to attain. May wisdom be proved right by her children.

Arise and plead Your own cause, O God. Father glorify Your Name.

Love in Jesus,
Bob (<http://www.scripturesongs.net>)

December 29, 2005

Dear Family,

I'm sorry I did not attend the gift exchange this year and am writing to explain why. I have attached a letter that will hopefully explain my reasons for withdrawing from the practice of celebrating "Christmas".

Please know that I am not withdrawing from **you**.

I love **you** and thank God for **you** and long to spend time with **you**
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I cherish you as my beloved family and as precious brothers and sisters in Jesus.

The effective outworking of this is: (a) I really do not wish to make a big deal out of this; and (b) while I love your generosity and thank you for it, in the future, I would ask you to please not give me gifts in the context of celebrating "Christmas". For reasons that are hopefully explained in the attached letter, I do not wish to participate in the yearly practice of celebrating "Christmas", including a gift exchange. Though I continue to look forward to gathering as family in Jesus Name.

Please forgive me if this offends. I wish there was some way that I could make it clear that I have no desire to sadden or hurt anyone.

How thankful I am for all aspects of the life of our precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and for blessing us with wonderful family like you.

Love always in Jesus,

da Bob 😊