**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Should Christians Celebrate the Birth of Christ by Means of Christmas?**

Thank you and good morning.

Christmas is just a few weeks away. Many will be celebrating Christmas as a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. That is what Christmas, celebrating the birth of Christ by means of decorating trees, decorating our houses, nativity scenes, Santa Clause, exchanging gifts, etc. The question I want to address on the program today is “Should Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ by means of Christmas?” Now all Christians believe in the virgin birth of Christ as revealed in Scripture. And all are grateful to God for His birth. But the question is does God want His people celebrating His birth by means of Christmas.

First of all everybody agrees that there is no way we can know when Jesus was born. The celebration of His birth by means of Christmas is nowhere found in Scripture. There is no command from God; there is no example of the early disciples ever observing Christmas. There is no way from what is written in Scripture that we can necessarily infer that God wants us to observe Christmas as a celebration of His Son’s birth. And so since God did not authorize the celebration of Christ’s birth by means of Christmas in the Scriptures, we conclude that Christians should not observe Christmas as a celebration of the birth of Christ.

That raises another question, “Do we need authority from the Lord for the observance of Christmas?” Does God permit us to devise our own form of worship to Him as we see fit, and then He sanctions them, or Does He give us instruction in His word about how He wants us to worship and serve Him and then expects us to follow His instructions and that alone?

The fact is God has given us instruction about how to serve and worship Him, and He also has told us in His word that we are to abide in what He has instructed, and not add to it or take from it.

Let me illustrate it like this. Suppose a father told his son “Here’s five dollars, go buy a loaf of bread.” The son goes and then returns with the loaf of bread, a candy bar, and some ice cream. The son might argue, “Dad, you didn’t tell me not to get any of these other things.” He would be correct. The father had not from his statement alone, limit the son to just what he specified. However, suppose the father had specifically told his son on several occasions before this, “Son, whenever I tell you to do something, don’t do anything more or less, don’t add to it, don’t take away from it.” Then the son would know that he was always restricted to just what his father told him, no more, no less. Having told the son the same thing several times, the father would not have to repeat it each time he told his son to do something.

This is exactly what God has done. He has told us in the Bible that we should not add to, take from, nor modify anything He has told us to believe and do.

Under the Old Covenant that God made with the children of Israel, God did not want the Israelites to add to, or take from the law He had given them.

Deut. 4:1-2 *1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you. 2 "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

Deut. 12:32 *"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.*

No only did God require the children of Israel to be careful to observe His commandments and not to add to them or take from them, but God also requires this of Christians under the New Covenant.

Rev. 22:18-19 *“18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;*

*19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”* Someone may say that this passage only applies to the book of Revelation, not to all the New Testament Scriptures. It is true that the phrase “the words of the prophecy of this book” have reference to the Revelation, but why should we not treat the rest of the New Testament scriptures with the same respect as the book of Revelation? This is a principle that has always applied to God’s law. It was true under the Old Covenant and it is true under the New, that is, we should not add to or take away from God’s word.

We are told to abide in the teaching of Christ and not beyond it. 2 John 9 says, *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”*  Not abiding in the doctrine of Christ would be going beyond the teaching of Christ. Jesus said to certain Jews who believed in Him, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”* (John 8:31) Who are the true disciples of Christ? Those who abide in His word.

Peter says in 1 Peter 4:11, *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God….”* What does this mean? Look with me in Numbers chapters 22-24. Balaam was a prophet of God. He was a greedy prophet, but he knew what it meant to be a prophet and to speak the words of the Lord. Balak, the kind of Moab wanted Balaam the prophet to curse the children of Israel. Num. 22:18 says, *“Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, ‘Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.’”*  Balaam new what his obligation was as a prophet of God, not to go beyond the word of the Lord. In Numbers 24:13, after failing to curse Israel, and feeling the anger of Balak, Balaam says again, *“If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD, to do good or bad of my own will. What the LORD says, that I must speak'?”* Balaam was not allowed to speak of his own will, from his own mind, but only what the Lord said that he should speak. This is what Peter is saying in 1 Peter 4:11, *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God….”*  We are not allowed to go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more.

This is the attitude that Jesus had. In [**John 8:28**](http://bible.logos.com/passage/esv/John%208.28), Jesus said, *"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.”*  In [**John 5:30**](http://bible.logos.com/passage/esv/John%205.30), He said, *"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”* Jesus did nothing on His own authority. Jesus’ judgment was not because most people agreed with His judgment, not because He had good judgment, but because He was seeking the Father’s will and not His own.

In [**John 12:49**](http://bible.logos.com/passage/esv/John%2012.49), Jesus said, *"For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”*  Jesus refused to speak on His own authority but relied on the commandments He had been given by God, the Father. Further, in [**John 5:19**](http://bible.logos.com/passage/esv/John%205.19), Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”* Jesus did not simply rely on what He wanted to do, He looked to the example of His Father and acted based on that.

Now, if Jesus refused to do His own will, but to do only the will of the Father, should not that be our attitude toward God’s will?

Why should Christians not observe Christmas as a celebration of the birth of Christ? It is because there is no authority from God to do so. Christmas originated with man, and not with God. To celebrate the birth of Christ by means of Christmas with decorated trees and decorated houses, with Santa Clause and exchanging gifts is to add a form of worship and service to the Lord that the Lord did not authorize. We would be devising a form of worship to God from our own minds, rather than submitting to the will of God.

Someone might say, “Celebrating Christmas is such an innocent practice. It doesn’t hurt anyone. What difference does it make?”

It all has to do with what God said, not what I may think.

Consider a couple of examples:

In Lev. 10:1-2 we read of Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron burning incense. It says, *“each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”* Notice, they offered profane fire before the Lord, what He had not commanded them. God had specified that the fire they were to use for the incense was to come from the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 16:12). Probably what had happened, Nadab and Abihu got the fire from another source. It was that which God had not commanded, and “so fire went out from the Lord and devoured them….” Now, let us make our point. What difference did it make where they got the fire? What they chose to use was what they could have consider as innocent and not hurting anybody. But the difference was in what God had commanded. God commanded one thing and they did something else. They disobeyed God and as a result they bore the consequences.

Look with me at another example. In 1 Sam. 15 verse 3 God said to king Saul, *'Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"* Saul is commanded to utterly destroy Amalek, all that they have. Saul and the people do not utterly destroy them. They spare the king of Amalek, and they spare the best of the sheep, oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to utterly destroy them, but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. (v. 9). Later Saul explains to Samuel why the best of the animals were not destroyed as God commanded. He said, *"They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."* My point is this: Saul and the people may have thought it reasonable to spare the best of the animals to sacrifice to God. Surely God would not be displeased with that! But Samuel said to him *"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.”* (v. 22) We may think from our own reasoning that God is pleased with a certain form of worship, but the only way we can know He is pleased is by doing what He said, by abiding in His word.

We have no word from the Lord to celebrate the birth of Christ by means of Christmas. Therefore, we should just abide in His word and not add to it or take from it.

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

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