

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith
Audio Script – December 24, 2009

Life is full of tests. Students in school & college campuses across the nation just finished semester finals. People in clinics & hospitals are undergoing medical tests. Engineers, scientists and research analysts are conducting their tests. In today's Templates of Truth, we discover that Christmas also has a test.

The Apostle John directed us to *test the spirits to see whether they are of God* (I John 4:1). In the next verse, John gives us the testing criteria which makes that determination: *every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God* (I John 4:2). To pass the Christmas test, you have to make a personal decision about what Christmas is and what it really means to you. Once you have made that determination, you apply it to the criteria that John established in order to discover if your perspective is one that passes the test.

Christmas means many things to many different people. We often say (and sing), "it's the most wonderful time of the year!" What makes it wonderful? Blinking lights, pine trees aglow, jolly old men dressed up in red velvet suits, mistletoe, brightly-colored boxes wrapped in dazzling ribbons & bows, candy canes, turkey dinners, discount savings at the mall, sugar cookies, fruit cake, parades, snowmen, sleigh bells and Rudolph? To many people, that's all Christmas is. These are the ones who put up "holiday trees," scribble "Merry Xmas" on everything, and are careful to simply wish you "Happy Holidays!" It's no more than a happy season of festive parties, reunions of family & friends, and the spreading of peace & good cheer through human generosity & giving. As wonderful as all that sounds, it fails John's Christmas test.

In his Gospel, John declared: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:1,14). To Whom was John referring? The first syllable in the word, "Christmas" gives us the clue – Jesus, the CHRIST of Christmas. The angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her: *You will bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High* (Luke 1:31-32). The angel told Joseph, her husband, *she will bear a son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save people from their sins* (Matthew 1:21). It is clear that Christmas day is the celebration of the birth of the Christ child, the event when God came in the flesh and dwelled for a time with mankind.

So, what does Christmas mean to you? Is it the day you celebrate the coming of your Savior? Is it the season of the year that you share the good news of His Gospel? Does it remind you of the sins from which you have been forgiven, the gift of your salvation, and the promise of a home in heaven throughout all eternity in His presence? Does Christmas cause you to want to express praise & worship to God for all He is and all He has done to shower blessing and favor into your life and family? Does it cause you to give with the same love and compassion in which God has given to you? Does Christmas make your love and devotion to God deeper and more intimate? Does it cause you to want to serve Him more and serve Him better? Does Christmas fill your heart, mind and soul with the truth of God's Word and the power of His Holy Spirit? If so,

congratulations – you pass the test!

You understand the Reason for the Season. You realize that Christmas day was God coming to earth in the form of baby, and growing into an amazing man who would eventually die for your sins. You celebrate the personal relationship you have with God that was made possible through your personal faith & trust in a tiny baby born that first Christmas night in a manger in Bethlehem. You've made an A+ on the Christmas test.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.

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