

Should Christians celebrate Christmas?

by Denver Cheddie

There are many well meaning Christians who do not celebrate Christmas or Easter. They consider them to be pagan festivals, and want absolutely nothing to do with them. There is nothing wrong with this. Considering the manner in which Christmas is celebrated by many unsaved people as well as Christians, it is easy to empathize with this position. I personally would condemn many of the customs and practices associated with Christmas e.g. Santa Claus and other myths. [I'm sorry if you're a child reading this for the first time]. However there are some who take this too far. They make it look as though something is wrong with Christians who celebrate Christmas, and they will even quote scriptures to suggest that owning a Christmas tree is a sin. This position is unwarranted.

On the other extreme, there are some Christians who hold such a high esteem of Christmas, that they get mortally offended if someone wishes them "Happy Holidays" rather than "Merry Christmas", or if someone writes "xmas" instead of "Christmas". They are X-ing Christ out of Christmas, they say. I know one pastor who had a mini-confrontation with a salesclerk in a store. After completing his purchase, this is the conversation that ensued:

SALES CLERK: Thanks for the purchase, Happy Holidays.

PASTOR (visibly upset): Merry Christmas

SALES CLERK: Happy Holidays.

PASTOR (more upset): Merry Christmas

SALES CLERK: Happy Holidays.

PASTOR (fuming mad): MERRY CHRISTMAS! MERRY CHRISTMAS! MERRY CHRISTMAS! JESUS LOVES YOU!!!!!!

... as he scurried away. He honestly thought he put the devil in his place. He actually felt "Happy Holidays" is the world's way of persecuting Christians for their faith in Christ. I would suggest that he do some missionary work in Indonesia or the Philippines. Then he would see what real persecution is.

Both extremes are unwarranted. Don't make Christmas a bigger deal than it is. It does have pagan origins. However, that is not a reason to not celebrate it. In this article I examine the most common arguments that Christians use to not celebrate Christmas. I will argue that God leaves it entirely up to us to celebrate Christmas or not - there is nothing wrong or superior about either position. Here are 5 reasons people give for not celebrating Christmas - some very valid, some totally bogus.

#1 God Never Commanded us to Celebrate Christ's Birthday

It is true that neither Jesus nor the apostles commanded that we celebrate the birth of Christ (although the mystery of godliness does include Christ's birth, 1 Tim 3:16). We are given two ordinances by which we are to remember Him, baptism and the Lord's supper. However Jesus also never told us ***not*** to celebrate His birth.

It is more important that we examine the precedent Jesus set. What if I can demonstrate that even Jesus celebrated something that God never commanded? In John 10:22, we see that Jesus celebrated the Feast of the Dedication. You would search in vain to find the Feast of Dedication anywhere in the Old Testament. This was ***not*** one of the Old Testament

feast days designated by God. This was instituted in 165 BC by Judas Maccabeus. It was also known as *Hanukkah*, celebrated in December. We also find Paul, in the church age, celebrating Jewish feast days (Acts 18:21). These are 2 cases of prominent Bible figures celebrating events which were not commanded of them. In both cases they were simply following the existing tradition **without** Divine fiat. How different in principle is celebrating Christmas today?

There are many grey areas of scripture where discretion is allowed. Concerning circumcision for example, Paul's unequivocal teaching was that adhering to the Jewish custom was not mandatory for Christians. Yet he was adamant that Timothy be circumcised (Acts 16:3). Paul obviously never bound himself to rules and regulations in this matter. He allowed flexibility as it pertained to the furtherance of the gospel. He became all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22). Experience has shown that Christmas is a time of the year when people are most open to the gospel. This unusual receptiveness facilitates the spreading of the true message of Christianity around this season. Instead of forsaking Christmas altogether, why not incorporate some carolling together with tract distribution as part of your Christmas program?

#2 Christmas Is Crucifying Jesus Anew

One writer theorized that since "the catholic mass is a sacrifice of Jesus Christ, meaning that every mass they observe is a new sacrifice of Jesus Christ, celebrating Christmas is denying the efficacious work of Christ. These repeated sacrifices put Christ to open shame (Heb. 6:6)."

I skipped two lines here because it takes a while to grasp the absurdity of that argument. I am baffled how eating fruit cake, visiting friends and family, giving to the less privileged, and preaching the gospel could ever

be putting Christ to open shame. In context, Heb. 6:6 is speaking of apostates who have deliberately abandoned Christ and it explains why they cannot be reconciled – there is no more atonement. It does not even indirectly refer to Christmas. This is using biblical phraseology taken out of context to superimpose ideas on the Word of God.

The argument continues, “If I look forward to the mass of Christ (Christmas), how could I be looking for the second coming? (Heb.9:28)”

What rubbish! The two are not mutually exclusive. The assumption, that those who celebrate Christmas are “*repeatedly looking for a sacrifice*”, is wrong because not everyone who partakes of the festival is doing so in cognizance of its catholic ramifications.

#3 Christmas Has A Pagan Origin

"The date December 25th was originally designated by the heathens before the church celebrated Christmas, to honor the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven, and was adopted by the Roman church to conciliate the heathen and to swell the number of adherents to Christianity. It was a pagan celebration of the unconquered sun (natahis solis invicti), which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase in light".

Essentially the origin of Christmas is pagan not biblical. Just because Christmas had a pagan origin in the year 274 AD, it does not mean that all who celebrate it today partake of a pagan festival. If you've ever sung the national anthem, you are singing a pagan song. Pagan only means that the origin is not God or the Bible. It does not mean demonic or sinful. Most Christians who celebrate Christmas today pay no regard whatsoever to any pagan deity associated with the original festival. They celebrate Christ.

Christmas, for me, is not even a celebration of Christ's birth. Most experts agree that Christ could not have been born in winter, and neither

would shepherds be out in the fields at that time of the year. As Christians we celebrate Christ all year round. In December, we visit family, clean and decorate our homes, buy gifts etc. How exactly is that pagan?

#4 The Christmas Tree Is Pagan

It is believed that the tree was a common form of decoration in pagan Rome and Egypt. “The mother of Adonis, the Sun-God and great mediatorial divinity, was mystically said to have been changed into a tree, and when in that state to have brought forth her divine son”.

I wish to reiterate that just because the tree was employed by pagans in idolatrous celebrations, it does not mean that using the tree today as a form of decoration is necessarily pagan. An idol is whatever we value as being equal to or above God. A statue or picture in my house means nothing if I don't worship it. For some people TV is an idol, that doesn't mean that everyone possessing a TV is an idolater. Neither is a Christmas tree necessarily an object of paganism.

Paul said that an idol is nothing and even eating food offered to idols makes one neither better nor worse. It is only a problem if it becomes a stumbling block to others (1 Cor. 8). If one were to argue that celebrating Christmas destroys the faith of weak believers or otherwise hinders the gospel, then that argument may have merit. But the only people offended by Christmas are a few petty disgruntled believers who are by no means weak in faith.

#5 Jeremiah 10

Jeremiah 10:

2) Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the

gentiles are dismayed at them.

3) For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax.

4) They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple.

5) They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot go by themselves.

Jeremiah 10 is often used to argue that Christians should not cut Christmas trees and decorate them. This, they argue, is heathen.

The context of this passage however is clear. It discusses the idolatry of the heathen nations. The cutting of trees mentioned in Jer 10:3-5 was for the making of wooden idols, not Christmas trees. The heathen of Jeremiah's day did not worship Christmas trees. Since Israel had already followed those nations in open idol worship, God was pleading with them not to go after those gods. The "way of the heathen" is that path which leads away from God. If someone could convince me that decorating a tree with tinsels and lights is sinful, I would repent and renounce Christmas.

Conclusion

Although the writers of the Bible do not command the celebration of Christmas, they do not prohibit it. When the gentiles began to be saved, concern arose among the Jews concerning circumcision and the law of Moses. The non-practice of circumcision would have been considered pagan by Old Testament standards since the state of uncircumcision was considered unclean. The verdict of the Jerusalem Council effectively stated that the church is indifferent to nuances of tradition, even so called pagan ones. In other words, as long as our hearts are purified by

faith ([Acts 15:9](#)), there is no difference between those who partake of certain festivities and those who don't, as long as those festivities are not innately antithetical to Christianity, as Christmas is not. The principles of Christianity make equal room for those who wish to celebrate Christmas and those who wish to abstain.

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