

## O Come, Let Us Ignore Him: Singing Carols About the Jesus You Won't Love

Jim Elliff

There we are, sitting in the large public music hall listening to Handel's "Messiah." We're feeling a bit claustrophobic before we start, our coats draped over our shoulders or chairs, and our bulky sweaters surrounding us like woolen nests. We're heating up nicely as they sing, "For unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given."



We continue to warm to the inspiring music as they reach, "And the government shall be upon His shou-ho-ho-ho-ho-holders."

On our crowded row are many who don't believe in the Son being sung about, yet are just as much enraptured by the music as we are. It's the best of Christmas traditions regardless of the layers of fabric suffocating us—a favorite community event with superb music from the finest of our local musicians. It is *expected* each Christmas season and many of us, unbelievers included, would be disappointed if it were not happening.

These same lovers of Christmas traditions will likely turn up at a church meeting this Christmas, which is every bit as much a seasonal event as going to the "Messiah". Maybe they will go on a Sunday morning, or to a religious Christmas musical, or to a candlelight service in the church "Mom and Dad used to attend." It's tradition.

### Seasonal Saints

There's an irony in religious Christmas celebrations. Holiday-only worshippers really do not love Christ. Rather, they prefer the opposite—avoiding Christ as much of the year as they possibly can. Thankfully, these celebrations and worship gatherings might introduce Christ to some who are seeking Him. But, for most who just want to be a little bit religious, this long-anticipated Christmas season brings out all kinds of hypocrisy.

A holiday-only worshipper thinks that a little bit of Jesus goes a long way, and Christmas (and/or Easter) is certainly enough to pay respects to the concept.

Christmas, if such easy-going folks were honest, is a little discomfiting precisely *because* of Jesus. But in that this is impossible, they will do their part to keep traditions alive.

### Another Jesus

"If one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached . . . you bear this beautifully (2 Cor 11:4)" Another Jesus? In fact, "yes." Some people can handle a *little bit* of Jesus with a certain amount of diffidence. But others must alter their Jesus to *another* of their own making.

"Another Jesus" might be a Jesus who remains in a manger, or a Jesus who indulges all humans in the world even those who reject Him, or One who does not proceed from the Father and is merely human. There are lots of Christs out there to choose from. Such people try to re-invent Jesus rather than submit to the One who said hard things and who demands more than they want to give. They don't want the One literally raised from the dead who will one day judge the world, and who offers a way of salvation that has to be "His way or no way." Instead, they concoct a Jesus who is more compatible with the lusts and sophistry of their own hearts.

Remade in our own image, Jesus can be attractive. And it is this Jesus of the imagination that so many can and do celebrate over Christmastime.

### "O Come, Let Us Ignore Him."

If you are one who sings to the one you run from or worships the Jesus you created in your own image, you have some choices to make. Should you stop celebrating the incarnation of the One who you don't love or ever intend to follow? Should you just get honest about it all and end the charade?

Better than all other possible "solutions," *following* the Christ you sing about would be the best. It's a huge change, I understand, but entirely possible. Find a pastor of a Bible-teaching church or seek out a friend who actually loves and follows Christ to talk to. Read an easy-to-understand version of the New Testament about Christ and ask real questions. Seek the truth. Find a church that is serious about Him, and listen to what is being said.

Perhaps you prefer the annual hypocrisy, but I hope you will consider, this year, singing to the authentic Jesus you will now love and believe and follow regardless of the season!