

# Christmas Choices

Jim Elliff

You don't have to celebrate Christmas. There is no command in the Bible to remember the time of Christ's birth—not even a hint of it—nor is there any illustration of that happening in New Testament days. As far as we can tell, the Apostles never had a Christmas meal together, or a special worship meeting on that day.

Yet, many churches will focus a significant part of their yearly calendar on emphasizing Christmas. Some will do so both before and after the holiday itself, dedicating weeks to it. And many people will think that Christmas is, of all times of the year, one of the most holy days in the life of believers. A good number who profess faith in Christ will think that attending special Christmas meetings, along with the Easter service, is required of God above almost all other obligations in the church year. Some of these become what is often called, "Christmas and Easter Christians," believing they have satisfied God at least on a rudimentary level because they attend to these special days. But neither Christmas nor Easter is a required celebration by God.

It might surprise you to hear me say that a pastor could preach a sermon on the resurrection of Christ at the annual Christmas Service, and likewise, a message on the birth of Christ at the yearly Easter meeting, and God would not be unhappy in the least.

For one thing, we likely don't have the date of Christ's birth on the right day. Many calculate his birth to be more in the September-October time frame, perhaps closer to the very end of September. Some project another date.



Almost certainly, it wasn't a time when snow was on the ground, as is depicted in so many nativity Christmas cards.

## *The More Important Question*

The most important question is not whether or not you have to celebrate Christmas, but *may* you do so. I say "yes." In fact, we do ourselves. We don't get upset with people who do not celebrate it for the obvious reasons. Nor are we worried when people get too commercial in their Christmas gift giving. Greed is wrong any time, but if a person is not greedy, then giving and exchanging gifts is not sinful. In fact, it may do much good in healing broken relationships.

If we wish to think about the birth of Christ during the December season, as long as we don't make it obligatory for everyone, or take people's enjoyment away by acting spiritually superior, then that's our business. God loves to be worshipped for His great acts, and the birth of Christ is among the few most important things God did for mankind. Worship him as you will and when you will. In fact, worship him in your actions and heart *all* the time.

What if you choose to exchange gifts with each other and do not say anything about Christ on Christmas Day. Have you sinned? No.

What if you wish to think about Jesus' birth two days after the December 25<sup>th</sup> date? Are you out of sync with God? Not at all.

The choice is yours as to what you will or will not do this Christmas.

But in all things you do, live as a believer should. Be grateful, kind, interested in others more than yourself, serving, generous, forgiving, and always mindful of what God through Christ has done for sinful people like you. In this way you please God most.

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