

## A Christmas Message

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December. Christmas. Most people recognize this as a time of celebration for one reason or another. It has been so since centuries before the birth of Christ as pagan societies chose the time around December 25th to celebrate the passing of the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. Fittingly, their celebrations revolved around worship of the sun. Today, the season is a time of warmth and giving and love. It is a time of joy and wishes for peace to all men. Some enjoy Christmas as a non-religious holiday and others celebrate it as Christ's birthday.

Of course, the Bible doesn't recognize a Christmas celebration. Celebrating at this time of year began long before Jesus was born, and many of the the practices we now associate with Christmas began hundreds of years after His birth. Many of the traditional Christmas trappings were borrowed by the Catholic Church from pagan beliefs. The Bible, on the other hand, emphasizes Christ's death. He could not have died had He not been born, but the greatness of His visit to earth is expressed more profoundly in His death, a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

The Bible says that the most meaningful aspects of Christmas - giving, peace, joy and appreciation for Jesus Christ - are to characterize our lives every day of the year. Jesus taught that our very lives are to be a celebration of the spirit of Christmas. Though it was not on the 25th of December, Jesus was definitely born into history, and His birth marked the beginning of the most remarkably perfect life ever lived. He lived without sin. He taught without error. He died without guilt. And He arose on the third day victorious over all the forces of evil that have ever sought to seduce the allegiance of men.

When Christ was born is not as important an issue as why He died. And why Christ died is not personally important to you unless He is born into your heart. Has He been? Is Jesus living in you? Can you say as the apostle Paul did in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;.." That ought to be the focus of December 25th and every other day of the year: Christ living in me and in you and in all with whom you and I share the story of His love.

Have a happy holiday season.