

Should Christians Celebrate Lent?



I recently received a letter from a reader who insisted, “Lent and Advent are both man-made, Romanish inventions, and something that born again believers should not be celebrating.”

That may be so, but certainly the historical event that each holiday has as its focus — Christ’s birth and His death, burial, and resurrection — deserve to be remembered and pondered by every Christian, whether they choose to officially observe Advent and Lent or not.

Undoubtedly, some pagan symbolism has crept into both holidays. Some Christians therefore choose to abstain from celebrating at all. Others opt to “redeem” such symbols by assigning Christian meanings to them.

For instance, the evergreen trees we decorate at Christmastime symbolize both the eternal life we have in Christ ([1 John 5:11-12](#)) and the blessings that come from being planted firmly in God’s word ([Psalm 1:2-3](#)). The Christmas lights we string on our house remind us that Jesus is the light of the world ([John 8:12](#)) and that we, too, should shine as lights to the dark and dying world around us ([Philippians 2:15](#)).

You get the idea.

I offer these explanations not as an attempt to convince anybody to celebrate either holiday. If you cannot partake with a clear conscience, you should not partake at all. Rather, I’m just highlighting the fact that many sincere Christians who observe Lent and Advent have hearts as free from paganism as they can possibly be.

Paul’s words in [Romans 14:5-12](#) apply here, as well:

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

For it is written, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

That is sobering thought, isn’t it? Each of us must one day give account of ourselves to God.

His Word contains explicit commands on some of the issues we face in our culture today (lust, pride, adultery, murder, etc). But other matters — like celebrating holidays or homeschooling your children or forgoing birth control or whether to breast- or bottle-feed — are really more a matter of preference and circumstance.

We need to be careful not ignore parts of Scripture that specifically address cultural trends, but also not to go beyond what Scripture says in matters of taste. It is a difficult balance to strike sometimes. And I’ve not always done as good job at it as I would like. But thankfully, God hasn’t given up on me yet! He is still hard at work, faithfully conforming me to the image of His blessed Son. And He is doing the same for my fellow Christians, including the one who originally wrote to me about this topic. I hope my response helps her see this issue from a different perspective.

Note: For readers who may be wondering what prompted the question as to whether Christians should celebrate Lent in the first place, it was written in response to the following free printables I offer on my website (www.flandersfamily.info)

- [Counting Down the Days to Christmas: A Scripture Chain for Advent](#)
- [Counting Down the Days to Easter: A Scripture Chain for Lent](#)

Do you share this reader’s conviction that Christians should not take part in Christmas or Easter celebrations of any kind? I fully support your right to hold such an opinion. Please ignore my links. These resources are not intended for you.

Do you view these holidays as wonderful opportunities to focus your thoughts on Christ and to encourage your children to do the same? These Scripture chains provide a simple way to do that. And they’re FREE! So check them out. And if you’d like another way to center your heart on Jesus this Lenten season, check out [Because He Lives](#), my devotional journal for Easter.

My goal in creating this little journal is to inspire you to think deeply about the unfathomable grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. His love for us compelled Him to take on flesh, come to earth, and pay the penalty for our sins by dying on a cruel cross. When He rose from the grave, He conquered sin and death forevermore so that forgiveness and eternal life can be ours by grace through faith in Him alone. Hallelujah! What a Savior!