

Christmas Dinner

Should I attend Christmas dinner with my extended family?

Many of today's Messianic Believers, who once celebrated Christmas, still have to interact with their Christian family during the Winter holiday season. The Spring holiday season is admittedly much easier, because Easter does not have the same kind of commercialism associated with it as Christmas, and many churches today hold some kind of Passover *seder* meal. It is much easier to tell Christian family, who are familiar with the Passover *seder* to some degree, that you remember Yeshua's resurrection in conjunction with your Messianic congregation's Passover remembrance.

How you answer your family's request as to what Messianics do to remember Yeshua's birth is not as easy, not only because there is no agreement in today's Messianic community as to what is to be done, but even more so because of the significant commercialism during this time of year. Christmas parties are held throughout the month of December, and traditionally extended family does get together for some kind of Christmas dinner. It is easy for Messianics who do not live close to extended Christian family to say that it will be difficult to attend Christmas dinner, but this is not everyone.

Too frequently, our ministry has heard stories of Messianics who will write mean-spirited letters to Christian family, telling them not to send them any Christmas presents or invite them to Christmas dinner as they "are not pagans anymore." This implies to extended family, who are God-fearing Christians who love Jesus, that they really do not know the Lord. The damage that this has done, and the bad reputation this has given our faith community, **is immense**. A person can always choose his or her friends, but a person can never choose his or her family. When you face the most difficult seasons in your life such as when a member of your immediate family dies, or when you are facing severe financial problems, your extended family will often be there to help, whereas your friends may not. You have the responsibility to always have good relations with your extended family, beyond the Fifth Commandment's requirement to honor father and mother (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16).

So when the month of December comes, should you turn down an invitation to Christmas dinner? *Only you can decide this for yourself*. Some will answer "No!" But some will attend. They will recognize that this might be the only time of year to see all of their extended family, especially those who are aging and who may not live long. Many of us just recognize Christmas dinner as yet another meal, and will keep our comments regarding "Christmas" to "Did you have a good holiday?" **Some of us desire good relations with our extended family**. And, in demonstrating a degree of good will to them, we actually find it appropriate to invite them into our homes during one of the nights of *Chanukah*—even if it might be under the "guise" that we will be eating some rather tasty fried foods!