

A Time For Everything  
Ecclesiastes Ch 3 v 2a

When were you born? I was born in the month of June and as a child I remember feeling sorry for those friends who had their birthdays around or even on Christmas Day. I felt that their special day was over shadowed by all the Christmas celebrations and that the build up to 25 December was much more important than **their** forth coming important day. But why the 25 December? Was Jesus really born on 25 December? Christians all over the world eagerly await the arrival of Christmas but even Christians cannot agree if that is the true date. Catholic and Protestant traditions celebrate Jesus' birth on 25 December but Orthodox Christians in countries like Russia, Greece and Egypt celebrate on 6 or 7 January. Some theologians calculate that Jesus' birth may have been in September. Others speculate on a Spring birth based on biblical information regarding the Angel Gabriel going to Elizabeth and telling of the birth of **her** son John the Baptist. Also the fact that shepherds looked after their sheep out on the hillside between Spring and Autumn but not in Winter confuses some people.

Does it really matter anyway? We celebrate an event not a date.

Ecclesiastes tells us that God chooses the time to be born. God chose the time for his son to be born - a time when the world was in need of 'a light' in what was a world of darkness. Malachi was the last prophet that God had spoken to and that was four centuries previous. The people were in a spiritual and a practical darkness. They were under heavy Roman rule, the Jews were beginning to fracture and there was constant friction between the different groups; Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots etc. Even the practicalities of Jesus' impending birth seemed bleak; Mary and Joseph were poor and they faced a long journey to Bethlehem. Following that wonderful night Jesus' life appeared under constant threat of persecution from Herod's men. Did God choose the correct time for His son to be born? Of course he did. We read over and over again the prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to 'a light' coming into the world and overcoming the darkness. Jesus was that light and in entering a world of darkness he brought light that will never be put out. That light brought with it love, peace and joy. God passes on those three gifts to us today. We must spread those gifts to others in our world so that God's light still shines brightly and will never be put out even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

For Discussion

1. How can you spread love, peace and joy this Christmas?

A blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you all

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