



## Cambodians and Christmas

The millions of devoted Cambodian Buddhists do not traditionally celebrate the Christmas holiday. As a Buddhist, the closest festival to the Christian Christmas would be the festival of Vesak, which has a striking resemblance to Christmas in many ways.

Vesak is held either in May or June each year, its date being governed by a full moon. This festival celebrates the birth of Buddha, his enlightenment and his death. On the selected date, devotees spend the day at their local temple taking part in chanting, singing, and meditation. It is also a day to celebrate with family and friends and share food, with some followers even decorating their homes with lights and specially made lanterns. Greeting cards are sent to each other. Vesak is regarded as an opportunity to bring joy, goodness, and happiness especially to those who are old and sick.

Cambodians, like everyone around the world, love to celebrate, love parties, and Christmas gives them one more opportunity to do so. The 25<sup>th</sup> of December is really no different from any other day in Cambodia yet year after year more and more of the Christmas spirit is showing up in Cambodia. I personally witnessed this when on one of my year-end trips, walking near my lodgings. I was struck by the many shops that were selling Christmas decorations, lights, and the trimmings we associate with this Christian festive day.

Cambodia has a very small Christian population, but thankfully it has the freedom to openly celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only this week have churches started their return to face-to-face meetings and this is a great opportunity for them to share the true meaning of Christ's coming into the world.

***Please pray that during this coming season, believers take the opportunity to share the true meaning of Christmas.***

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Cambodia Action would like to wish all of our readers and supporters a blessed Christmas. May His Peace and Joy fill your home this season.

God Bless.

*Chris*