

What Does The Bible Say About
The Birth of Jesus?

When Was Jesus Born?

- Our calendar is based on the time of Jesus' coming.
- 2016 A.D. (Anno Domini = "the year of our Lord")
- History's best indicators show that Jesus was born somewhere between 7 B.C. and 4 B.C.
 - Dionysius Exiguus, (470-544 A.D.) the Roman monk responsible for our current calendar system made an error of 4-6 years in changing from a Roman system of dating to that which we currently use. It involved his dating the birth of Jesus at 753 a.u.c. (from the founding of Rome)
 - Some Bible publishers reflect that dating in a side reference.



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- *Biblical evidence regarding the year is found in the mention of...*
 - Herod the Great (Matt. 2:1).
Died in 4 B.C.
 - Jesus was obviously born before the death of Herod.
 - Herod decreed that all the babies two and under were to be slain in Bethlehem. (Matt. 2:16)



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- What about the month and the day?
 - In Luke 2:8 we read, "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night."
 - "According to this statement, Jesus cannot have been born in December, in the middle of the rainy season, as has been since the fourth century supposed ... According to the Rabbins, the driving forth of the flocks took place in March, the bringing in of them in November..." (*Critical and Exegetical Handbook To The Gospels of Mark and Luke*, H.A.W. Meyer, p. 273).

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- It is also a fact that the Jews sent out their flocks into the mountainous and desert regions during the summer months, and took them up in the latter part of October or the first of November, when the cold weather commenced....It is probable from this that our Savior was born before the 25th of December, or before what we call "Christmas."
- At that time it is cold, and especially in the high and mountainous regions about Bethlehem. But the exact time of his birth is unknown; there is no way to ascertain it. By different learned men it has been fixed at each month in the year. Nor is it of consequence to "know" the time; if it were, God would have preserved the record of it. Matters of moment are clearly revealed; those which "he" regards as of no importance are concealed. (Albert Barnes, Commentary on Luke)

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- It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the Passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain: during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the Passover occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to part of our October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could he have been born later than September, as the flocks were still in the fields by night. On this very ground the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact, which casts considerable light upon this disputed point. (*Adam Clarke*)

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- The time in which Christ was born has been considered a subject of great importance among Christians. However, the matter has been considered of no moment by Him who inspired the evangelists; as not one hint is dropped on the subject, by which it might be possible even to guess nearly to the time, except the chronological fact mentioned above... Learned and pious men have trifled egregiously on this subject, making that of importance which the Holy Spirit, by his silence, has plainly informed them is of none. Fabricius gives a catalogue of no less than 136 different (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*, p. 857).

When Was The “Birthday” of Jesus First Observed?

- "Christmas was for the first time celebrated in Rome in 354, in Constantinople in 379, and in Antioch in 388." (*Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Norval Geldenhuys, p. 102).
- Chrysostom, in a Christmas sermon, A.D. 386, says, 'It is not ten years since this day was clearly known to us...'" (*Unger Bible Dictionary*, p. 196).
- "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church, and before the fifth century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether January 6th, March 25th, or December 25th." (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 5, p. 641).

Why Was This Date (Dec. 25) Chosen?

- Outgrowth of historical circumstances:
 - Controversies of the 4th and 5th centuries over the nature of Jesus – the nature of His Deity and humanity.
 - Epiphany – “appearing” observed on Jan. 6.
 - Dec. 25 began to be observed as the day of his birth, but those who believed that he came as God in the flesh.

Why Was This Date (Dec. 25) Chosen?

- Chosen as “Christian” adaptation of the celebration of the Roman Sun God, Mithra.
 - Emperor Constantine. (Battle of Milvian Bridge –312 A.D.; Edict of Milan 313 A.D.)
 - The old pagan festivals were adapted to observances considered to be “Christian”. Dec. 25 the day of celebration to the Sun God was chosen to celebrate the birth of Jesus around the middle of the 4th century.



Why Was This Date (Dec. 25) Chosen?

- "Numerous theories have been put forward through the last 2,000 years to explain Dec. 25 as Christmas Day. The most likely one, however, the one most generally accepted by scholars now, is that the birth of Christ was assigned to the date of the winter solstice.
- This date is Dec. 21 in our calendar, but was Dec. 25 in the Julian calendar which predated our own ... The solstice, when days begin to lengthen in the northern hemisphere, was referred to by pagans as the 'Birthday of the Unconquered Sun'.
- During the third century, the Emperor Aurelian proclaimed Dec. 25 as a special day dedicated to the sun-god, whose cult was very strong in Rome at that time. Even before this time, Christian writers already had begun to refer to Jesus as the Sun of Justice.
- It seemed quite logical, therefore, that as Christianity begun to dominate the religious scene in the Roman Empire, the date of the 'new-born sun' should be chosen as the birthdate of Christ. Apparently, it bothers some people that the date for Christmas has its roots in a pagan feast. Be that as it may, it's the best explanation we have for the choice of Dec. 25 to celebrate the birth of Jesus." (*The New Question Box*, p. 28-29).

What Is The Origin Of The Word “Christmas”?

- A shortened form of “Christ mass.”
- A “Mass” is seen by Roman Catholicism as a sacrament in which Jesus is repeatedly offered as a sacrifice.
- Heb. 9:26-27 → 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

The Biblical Account or The Christmas Story

- The Christmas story often presents a scene with a star over a stable, a baby in a manger being worshipped by shepherds, three wise men and angels -- scene that is never recorded in the Bible.
- Two accounts:
 - Matthew: tells of the wise men. (Matt. 2:1-12; cf. 13)
 - Who went to the house and see the young child (v-11)
 - Luke: tells of the shepherds. (Lk. 2:8-17)
 - Visit the babe lying in the manger. (v-12,16)
- The baby became a man and the focus of the gospel is His death, burial and resurrection of Jesus for our sins. (1 Cor. 15:1-5; Acts 2:36-38)