The Birth Date of Jesus

(In View of Christmas)

**Introduction**

Christmas and the birth of Jesus are hot topics come Thanksgiving time through the New Year. Christians swing from believing Jesus was born on December 25th to believing He was born in the spring or the fall. There are many articles available to convince people of a particular side. Obviously, they all cannot be correct. Then, the matter of Christmas itself affords much debate as well as shunning, depending on your stance. This article will present history related to Jesus’ birth and history related to the celebration of Christmas.

Because Christmas often stirs emotions, people may not be objective, but rather subjective, emotional, and political in their understanding and convictions. Hopefully, this article will be objective and not promote a personal bias, but rather promote and support a spiritual and Biblical view of Jesus’ birth and the celebration called Christmas. Consider that the majority of the world celebrates Christmas as a cultural holiday with many traditions that vary by country. The birth of Jesus may be “mixed” in with the festivities, but takes a back seat.

**The Bible and Christmas**

**No Biblical Precedent for an Ongoing Celebration**

The time in which Christ was born has been considered a subject of great importance among Christians. However, the One who inspired the apostles and evangelists did not give any reference of a holy day to celebrate Christ’s birth nor is the time of His birth given definitively in the Bible. 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 (*Clarke’s Commentary on Luke 2:8, Vol. V, p227*)

The church of our Lord was a part of God’s eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:10-11). The New Testament church did not celebrate, in any special way, the birth of Christ. God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness in the scriptures (2 Peter 1:3). There is no authority for the church to participate in any kind of special service related to Christmas. New Testament believers were warned regarding the observance of days, etc. (Colossians 2:16; Galatians 4:10-11). [*Ferrell Jenkins, the Truth About Christmas*]

The Bible makes no mention of celebrating Jesus’ birth other than the actual day He was born in Bethlehem. There is no Old Testament prophecy alluding to such and neither does the New Testament imply or demand such an ongoing celebration.

It took Christians over 300 years to get around to celebrating their Lord’s birthday. Christmas was first observed in Rome about 336 AD. Another century went by before the festival became general throughout the Christian world. [*The Orthodox Herald, Jan. 1964*]

**Spiritual Basis to Celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ**

The Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) expressly condemned the doctrine that God did not become incarnate in Jesus at His birth. Therefore, some scholars attribute the celebration of Christmas to theological reasoning. [*James Taylor, The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 223*]

It is striking to note that the Council of Nicaea fought a critical battle, insisting on the incarnation of Jesus Christ. John 1:14 states that the “**Word became flesh and tabernacled (dwelt) among us**.” At that time, many prevalent teachers argued that Jesus was not fully human. It may be inferred that after the declaration of Christ’s incarnation was published and confirmed at Nicaea, some felt to establish the celebration of the birth of Jesus to underscore this truth.

**Christmas as a Holiday**

Christmas is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. For nearly two millennia, people around the world have been observing it with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular in nature. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. December 25 – Christmas Day – has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870.

**Winter Solstice – a Time of Celebration Worldwide**

The middle of winter has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of the man called Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of winter. Many peoples rejoiced during the winter solstice, when the worst of the winter was behind them and they could look forward to longer days and extended hours of sunlight.

In Scandinavia, the Norse celebrated **Yule** from December 21, the winter solstice, through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large **logs**, which they would set on fire. The people would feast until the log burned out, which could take as many as 12 days. The Norse believed that each spark from the fire represented a new pig or calf that would be born during the coming year.

The end of December was a perfect time for celebration in most areas of Europe. At that time of year, most cattle were slaughtered so they would not have to be fed during the winter. For many, it was the only time of year when they had a supply of fresh meat. In addition, most wine and beer made during the year was finally fermented and ready for drinking.

 **Adopting and Absorbing Pagan Traditions**

The birth of Jesus was not celebrated until the fourth century when church officials decided to institute the birth of Jesus as a holiday. The Bible does not mention the date for Christ’s birth (a fact Puritans later pointed out in order to deny the legitimacy of the celebration). Although some evidence suggests that his birth may have occurred in the spring (e.g. why would shepherds be herding in the middle of winter?), Pope Julius I chose December 25. It is commonly believed that the church chose this date in an effort to adopt and absorb the traditions of the pagan Saturnalia festival. [*history.com*]

The Romans celebrated the Mithraic feast of the Sun God. The Roman Saturnalia and other pagan feasts came at this time also. The idea of light, which appeared in Christ and dispersed the darkness is certainly basic in Christianity (John 1:5ff). The Emperor Constantine the Great “Pursued the deliberate policy of uniting the worship of the Sun with that of Christ” (Cullman, p. 29). “Sometime before AD 336 the church in Rome, unable to stamp out this pagan festival, spiritualized it as the Feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness. [*James Taylor, The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 223*]

First called the Feast of the Nativity, the custom spread to Egypt by 432 A.D. and to England by the end of the sixth century. By the end of the eighth century, the celebration of Christmas had spread all the way to Scandinavia. Today, in the Greek and Russian orthodox churches, Christmas is celebrated 13 days after the 25th, which is also referred to as the Epiphany or Three Kings Day. This is the day it is believed that the wise men (magi) finally found Jesus in the manger. [Matthew 2 records the “magi” found Jesus in a house, not the manger.]

By holding Christmas at the same time as traditional winter solstice festivals, church leaders increased the chances that Christmas would be popularly embraced, but gave up the ability to dictate how it was celebrated. By the Middle Ages, Christianity had, for the most part, replaced pagan religion. On Christmas, believers attended church, then celebrated raucously in a drunken, carnival-like atmosphere similar to today’s Mardi Gras. Each year, a beggar or student would be crowned the “lord of misrule” and eager celebrants played the part of his subjects. The poor would go to the houses of the rich and demand their best food and drink. If owners failed to comply, their visitors would most likely terrorize them with mischief. Christmas became the time of year when the upper classes could repay their real or imagined “debt” to society by entertaining less fortunate citizens.

## Christmas Outlawed Due to Pagan Roots

In the early 17th century, a wave of religious reform changed the way Christmas was celebrated in Europe. When Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan forces took over England in 1645, they vowed to rid England of decadence and, as part of their effort, cancelled Christmas. By popular demand, Charles II was restored to the throne and, with him, came the return of the popular holiday.

The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than Cromwell. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. By contrast, in the Jamestown settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident.

**Christmas In America**

After the American Revolution, English customs fell out of favor, including Christmas. In fact, Christmas wasn’t declared a federal holiday until June 26, 1870. [*history.com*]

In the first half of the 19th century, Christmas was a very different kind of holiday than it is today. People did not have a set way of celebrating. Christmas was not even an official holiday yet. So, communities around the country honored the day in different ways. Some observed Christmas as an important Christian religious day, honoring the birth of Jesus. Others celebrated the day with parties, music, drinking and eating. And, some communities did not celebrate the day at all.

But, it was during the early 1800s that Americans began to reinvent the holiday. They started combining ancient Christmas traditions with modern American influences. Christmas had different meanings for Americans who came from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Many immigrants brought Christmas traditions from their own countries. Religion played a big role in how an American might celebrate the holiday. Calvinist Christians banned the celebration of Christmas. But groups such as Episcopalians and Moravians honored the day with religious services and seasonal decorations.

By mid-century, Christian groups began to ignore their religious differences over the meaning of Christmas and honored the day in special ways. Christmas became an important time for families to celebrate at home. More and more Christian Americans also began to follow the European traditions of Christmas trees and giving gifts. Christians believed that the tree represented everlasting life and was also a sign of new beginnings. German immigrants brought their tradition of putting lights, sweets and toys on the branches of evergreen trees placed in their homes. This tradition of setting up a Christmas tree soon spread to many American homes and so did the practice of giving people presents. As these traditions increased in popularity, the modern trade and business linked to Christmas also grew.

As Christmas became more popular, some states declared the day a state holiday. Louisiana was the first state to make the move in 1837. By 1860, 14 other states had followed. It was not until 1870 that President Ulysses Grant made Christmas a federal holiday. Americans already knew old Christmas songs that came from England and other areas of Europe. But many new American Christmas songs started to become popular. For example, in 1849, a religious leader from Massachusetts wrote the words to “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.” The song “Jingle Bells” appeared seven years later. And, a year later, a religious leader in Williamsport, Pennsylvania wrote the song “We Three Kings of Orient Are.”

One of the holiday’s most famous representations is embodied in Santa Claus. This character is based on the story of Saint Nicholas, a Christian holy person believed to have lived in the third century (A.D. 270 – 343). Saint Nicholas became known as a protector of children. In his role as a Christmas hero, different cultures have given him different names. These include Sinterklaas, Kris Kringle and Father Christmas. But for most Americans his most popular name would become Santa Claus. [*learningenglish.voanews.com*]

**Mixed Reviews**

Many Christians boldly claim December 25th as Jesus’ birthday and relish in the traditions of gift giving, Christmas lights, decorating the Christmas tree, family gathering, and charitable giving to those less prospered. Others retort to unbelievers, “Let’s put Christ back into Christmas.” Some realize that Jesus’ birth was not in December, but celebrate the holiday anyway. It is estimated that over 80% of non-Christians in the United States also celebrate Christmas, but as a cultural holiday. This shows the celebration of Christmas is a “mixed” holiday. It joins many nonbiblical traditions and pagan festivities with only one true Biblical event, the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The actual date of Christ’s birth is generally understood not to be in winter and this article will offer some spiritual and Biblical perspective later. 1 Corinthians 5:6-7, “**Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? 7Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch**.” It is dangerous to “Christianize” days and events that God has not ordained as holy and pure. Christmas is mixed and therefore, impure. This is the main reason that saints throughout church history rejected the observance of Christmas, including John Calvin, the Puritans, the Pilgrims, and Quakers. Even the general American public refused to celebrate until the latter part of the 19th century.

Consider a practical example of mixture that many Christians approve: the nativity scene. The nativity scene shows the Lord Jesus in a manger within a barn-like structure outside an Inn that had no room. Mary, His mother, and Joseph, his father, were present along with shepherds and the Magi (wise men from the east). According to Matthew 2:1, the Magi were not present at the time of Jesus’ birth, but came 1-2 years later and found Jesus in a house (Matthew 2:11). King Herod sent out men to kill all male children two years old and under in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16) after he had spoken to the Magi about Jesus. This implies that Jesus must have been closer to two years old than a newborn. Yet, Christians will not give up such a nativity scene tradition. This is leaven.

**Should Christians Celebrate Christmas?**

 **Politics Versus Truth**

It is unfortunate that Christians have become polarized by politics in the matter of Christmas, meaning that many Christians have lost sight of God’s holiness and God’s ordination and have accepted fervently the traditions and festivities of Christmas despite impure roots and inclusion of Christ’s birth as mainly a side note. With that said, there is a spiritual basis to celebrate the incarnation of Jesus, which would stem from His human birth in Bethlehem. Romans 14:4-9 does permit believers in Christ to hold one day above another or to hold all days the same as long as they are fully persuaded before the Lord. We should not judge any of the Lord’s children. All will give an account to the Lord (Romans 14:10-12).

 **Stumbling Block to a Brother/Sister in Christ**

However, to endorse and promote nonbiblical traditions with pagan roots and revelry is dangerous to one’s own spiritual life as well as to others, and is often divisive. It also represents a stumbling block to other believers in Christ. All of the pagan traditions and festivities were idolatrous in nature. Christians should love their brothers and sisters in Christ, meaning they should lay down their lives for them (1 John 3:16) rather than insist on idolatrous practices that are accepted by the world’s standard. Romans 14:13-15 strongly emphasizes that no one should put a stumbling block or cause of falling before a brother in Christ, one for whom Christ died. Even if you feel justified before God to celebrate such a holiday with so many worldly influences, 1 Corinthians 8:9-11 states, “**Beware lest somehow this right of yours become a stumbling block to the weak ones, … the brother (or sister) for whom Christ died**.”

The extent to which an individual may participate in the activities of Christmas is a matter of opinion. Many families celebrate Christmas as a civil or cultural holiday. It is a time for families to gather. The participation in the religious aspect of Christmas (the incarnation of Jesus) may fall within the category of Romans 14:5, “**Each person should be “fully persuaded in his mind**.” Promoting Christmas as Jesus’ birth, however, especially knowing its true roots, could also be considered a stumbling block to other believers (Romans 14). [*Ferrell Jenkins, the Truth About Christmas*]

When Was Christ Actually Born?

Israel is located between 32 – 35⁰ north latitude. The average year-round temperature is 49 ⁰F or 9.5 ⁰C (January) to 77 ⁰F or 25 ⁰C (August), ranging from temperatures in the 90s (summer) and 30s (winter). Winter is the rainy season, but snow is not unusual, although it rarely remains for extended periods of time. Even to this day, December to February represents the least visited time of year for tourists in Israel. Bethlehem averages about 20 inches (53 cm) of snowfall annually.

The Biblical account of the birth of Christ is recorded in Matthew 1:18 – 2:1-23 and Luke 2:1-20). There are some clues to follow but no definitive word on the actual day Christ was born. As mentioned earlier, the Matthew account points to the visitation of the Magi (“wise men” or astrologers) from the east who bore gifts to Christ. Jesus was most likely older than one- and one-half years old at that time and the Magi entered into a house, not an animal stall. Two other clues are recorded in Luke: 1) Caesar Augustus proclaimed a census which was applicable to all in the Roman Empire, not just the Jews; and 2) there were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night.

December is an unlikely time for a Jewish couple from Nazareth to be traveling to Bethlehem for the Roman census while the woman, Mary, was about to bear a son (Luke 2:6). Not only could the weather be too cold and rainy that time of year for shepherds to be “out in their fields,” as the gospels say, but the Romans would probably not have held their census during the winter because it required families to travel back to the father’s hometown to register. Joseph’s family hailed from Bethlehem. [*wnd.com*]

**When Would Shepherds Keep Watch by Night?**

Not only that, but the shepherds were most likely adults. Usually, an older child or young teenager in the family stays with the sheep through the night rather than an adult (see 1 Samuel 16:11 and 17:15, where the Hebrew text reads that young David “watches over his father’s sheep”). Even today, children of Middle Eastern shepherds mind the sheep through the night, whereas the adults spend nights out of doors only during the birthing period or during a crisis. Luke’s description features adult shepherds who are with the sheep. Therefore, the nighttime scene points to the lambing season, the springtime. In fact, the Greek expression that is translated “keeping watch over their flock by night” reads literally, “guarding watches of the night over their flock.” Because ancient Jewish people divided the nighttime hours into three watches, the language implies the shepherds are with their flock all night. Ewes are basically helpless when giving birth. So, the shepherds stay with them to see that the newborn lambs are dried off and kept warm during that first cold night. [*BYU New Testament Commentary*]

**Lambing Season (Nisan − March to April)**

The sheep was used in Bible times more than any other animal for sacrificial purposes. A young male lamb was used in most cases as a thanksgiving offering, as atonement for transgression, or as redemption of a more valuable animal. The offering of the Passover Lamb was the most important religious act of the year. This lamb had to be a male, which was selected after minute examination, in order that it be free from any blemish, and it was to be a one-year-old. It was killed on the fourteenth of the month Abib (after the Babylonian captivity Nisan, about the equivalent of our April), and the blood was sprinkled with hyssop. (cf. Exod. 12; Lev. 23:5 f.; Matt. 26:17-29). [*Bible History Online*]

**The shepherds throughout history would be moving between the Jordan Valley in the winter where it is warm and they move out in the spring time as the Judean Hills begin to get green from the winter rains. … It is said that the Shepherds were staying awake at night when the Angels appeared.** **We have to understand the Lambing Season in the Holy land. The “lambing season” is directly relevant, like all mammals’ reproduction, to** **the time of mating. This** **only occurs naturally in the sheep world with the declining day light in the autumn which** **starts for us in September. The** **reason being that the offspring would appear in the spring when the grass starts to grow in order to feed the mother ewe so milk production is maximized. The gestation period of sheep is 147 days +/- 5 days (~4.5 months).**

**During this mating season, the shepherds are out there at night keeping watch on their flock not only to protect them from the wolves or Hyenas, but also to separate** **the females that have already been mated from the rest of the male lambs. After the mating period the Shepherd’s will slowly make their trek back down into the Jordan Valley to camp out for the winter at the lower elevations. [*Discover the Bible Lands*]**

A generally accepted and valid reason for shepherds to be out in the field with their flock by night: Lambing season. Lambs are usually born in spring, in a time period of about one month (mid-march – April), and during that season, the sheep cannot be kept in a pen at night because it would be too crowded for birth. Unlike most other farm animals, sheep are seasonal breeders and lamb in the spring months when the weather is warming and ample supplies of grass are available. Sheep can be housed for lambing or are more commonly brought to a field close to the farmyard where the shepherd can keep an eye on them.

Jesus was not born during Pesach or any of the three Jewish feasts, on which all Jewish men had to be in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:1-17): Pesach (פֶּסַח, the Passover), Shavuot (שבועות‎, Pentecost) and Sukkot (סֻכּוֹת, feast of tabernacles). However, Joseph was with his family in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-7).

The celebration of Pesach (פֶּסַח, the Passover) was during the lambing season since the sacrificial lambs for this feast had to be exactly one year old (Exodus 12:5). It is not surprising that the Lamb of God (John 1:29) could be born during the lambing season, right before Pesach (based on Luke 2:8). Furthermore, the Lambs for the Pesach sacrifice were kept in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1). … Since these lambs were special and could not be hurt or damaged in order to be pure for the sacrifice, the shepherds who kept them were specifically trained for this task. They had to make sure nothing happened to the sacrificial lambs. These were the men who came to witness the birth of the Lamb of God. [*The Feasts by Jonathan 33m4*]

**Not in Winter (December through February)**

The shepherds lived most of the year outside, away from the townspeople. "Abiding in the field" (KJV) is the Greek verb agrauleo, "live out of doors." Flocks were kept outside in this way from April to November, and, sometimes during the winter in suitable locations. They were constantly with their sheep, since the sheep were vulnerable to all kinds of trouble. "Keeping watch" is a combination of two related Greek words. The verb is phulasso, "to carry out sentinel functions, watch, guard." The noun is phulake, "the act of guarding." Together they carry the idea of "keep watch, do guard duty." The shepherds made sure that the sheep were safe from wandering off and injuring themselves, as well as dangers from thieves and wolves. [*Jesus Walk Bible Studies*]

Shepherds did not remain in one place, but moved with the season of the year, taking his flock to the higher hills in the hot summer, and in winter going southwards and descending to the warmer plains. [*truthortradition.com*]

 “**And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered**” (Luke 2:1). “All the world” in this context would mean all the areas under Roman rule. “**This census took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So, all went to be registered, everyone to his own city**” (Luke 2:2-3).

What kind of people were the Romans when it came to order and efficiency? They built bridges, roads and buildings that in some cases are still in use to this day, 2,000 years later. Their roads were marvels of engineering. They constructed great waterworks and sewage systems. Even today, our city planning owes a great deal to the Romans. Even much of modern government and military organization is copied from the Romans. They were masters of organization and structure. The point being, it is unlikely that the Romans would have ordered a census in the dead of winter [*December through February*]. This would have been counterproductive in winter, temperatures may drop below freezing around Jerusalem, and the roads were often muddy and wet with cold rains and occasional snow. In general, it would have been a difficult time to travel, especially for a wife nearing her delivery.

One author states that this census “could hardly have been at that season [winter], however, for such a time would surely not have been chosen by the authorities for a public enrollment, which necessitated the population’s traveling from all parts to their natal districts, storms and rain making journeys both unsafe and unpleasant in winter, except in especially favorable years. Snow is not at all uncommon at Jerusalem in the winter months, and I have known it so deep that people lost their way outside the gates” (*Cunningham Geikie, “Christmas at Bethlehem,” Edward Deems, editor, Holy-Days and Holidays, 1968, p. 405*).

Winter is the rainy season in Israel, so it rains a lot and the temperature falls off. So, people move their sheep into the sheep pen at least by October so that they can go through winter there. Therefore, it is hard to keep watching over the flock of sheep in the fields at night in midwinter, December. [*World Mission Society of God*]

*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 'Palestine: Climate' speaks of the winter season, 'moist, rainy, mild, from November to April'. Under the heading 'Winter' we are told that "the cold of winter is not usually very severe, though the north winds are very penetrating from the middle of December to the middle of February. Snow and hail during most winters fall on the hills. On the central range snow has been known to reach a depth of nearly two feet, and to lie for five days or even more, and the pools at Jerusalem have sometimes been covered with ice. But this is rare. On the central range the ground seldom freezes, and the snow usually disappears in a day."

Toward the end of the dry season (summer and fall), a shepherd might move his flock to the coastal plains and valleys. When the cold rains began, he would lead them back home to winter indoors. Otherwise, the animals could perish outside in the lashing rains, hailstorms, and snow. From November till spring, shepherds would not graze their flocks outdoors.

In the late autumn or winter months, there are times when the shepherd can find no pasturage that is available for his flock, and then he must become responsible for feeding the animals himself. If the flock is small there may be times when it is stabled within the peasant house, and the family lives on a sort of mezzanine floor above it. At such seasons of the year, the shepherd must provide the food. This is alluded to in Isaiah when he wrote: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd" (Isa. 40:11). [*Bible History Online*]

Christ’s Life and Jewish Festivals

The central events of Jesus Christ’s life take place on established Jewish holy days. This is because Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament types, shadows, and figures. For example, Jesus was the Passover Lamb to be sacrificed for the sins of the people (1 Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29). The Passover lamb needed to be inspected carefully (it took 4 days) to ensure that it had no defect, deformities, or weaknesses. Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem one week prior to His death in order to undergo such an inspection by the religious leaders (Matthew 21). This entrance into Jerusalem became known as “Palm Sunday”. When John the baptizer introduced Jesus to the world in John 1:26-34, he would baptize Jesus in the Jordan river. The lamb of God was baptized, signifying He would die and resurrect (Romans 6:3-6).

The Passover festival was a remembrance of God’s redemption of Israel from Egypt after their 400+ years of slavery. A Passover lamb was sacrificed and eaten. Jesus died during the Passover festival. Christ’s resurrection was during the feast of the First fruit (Acts 13:27-39; Hebrews 1:5-6; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Pentecost, the feast of weeks, was celebrated 50 days after Passover. To the Jew, it was an early celebration of harvest. To the believers in Christ, it was the time of Jesus’ ascension, coming at Pentecost when the disciples were in the upper room praying. The Spirit was poured forth (Acts 2:1-4). This is considered the beginning of the church age in which the Body of Christ would be the manifestation of Jesus in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:15-16).

The Feast of Tabernacles took place at the end of the harvest season and was a time of spiritual purification for a man and a woman, to reconcile with God. It's a season of overwhelming joy. The abundant crops are a reminder of God's goodness. Israel rejoices in the miraculous protection of God who accompanied them in the desert. Jesus came to tabernacle (dwell) with men (John 1:14).

There are other major feasts (unleavened bread, trumpets, day of atonement) that can be associated with the life of Christ. However, it is worth noting that there is no feast that would correspond to Jesus’ or the Messiah’s birth. It is interesting to note that the major feasts were either in the spring or in the fall, none during the winter months.

Conclusion

The holiday of Christmas has no Biblical precedent. On one hand, religious leaders in the fourth century AD may have derived such a holiday in order to emphasize that Jesus, in fact, was born a human being (incarnation). On the other hand, December 25th was universally used as a time of festival and revelry to celebrate winter solstice, in which the day length increased. Other countries and religions (beside America) celebrate Christmas at later days.

Christmas, as celebrated today, is a conglomeration of pagan festivals, cultural traditions, and ongoing rituals that include the birth of Jesus as one of many aspects. Because of this, Christians have contended about the origins and relevance of instituting a holiday for the birth of Jesus. It is a mixture (impure at that) at best. We should consider the matter of not being a stumbling block as we decide before the Lord whether to celebrate Christmas or not. However, each has the right to choose as we all will give an account to God Himself one day.

The day of the Lord Jesus’ birth is unknown, but the evidence strongly implies that it could not have been during the winter months of December through February. The Bible says that the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night. This implies they were outdoors with the sheep at night, meaning it is a stretch to think it was during winter because they mainly stayed in folds or caves during the winter months. Many scholars point to early spring as the time of the Lord’s birth, which is the lambing season (giving birth). They associate Jesus as the Lamb of God with the Jewish Passover at hand. Other scholars point to the fall (October) when shepherds would be protecting the mating of lambs. Lambs gave birth in under five months from conception, which would place the birthing in March/April. During both the spring or the fall, shepherds would be outside with their flocks at night rather than keeping them in a fold or cave.