

Why Do Christians Celebrate Christmas?



If your answer would be ... “because we are remembering the birth of our Lord” ... then you need to read on.

This booklet contains both historical fact and God-given revelation about our Christian celebrations.

So, we celebrate on the wrong dates. What about 'how' we celebrate?

The Romans also practiced many of the traditions familiar to us, specifically the "Christmas tree".

Although the Christmas tree is a later development in the celebration of Christmas (having its origins in Germany at the time of the reformation), the Romans often cut down evergreens and decorated them to pay homage to Saturn. This was to honor the fact that the evergreens remained alive during the harshness of winter in the Mediterranean. It was also traditional for Romans to exchange gifts during this holiday. These gifts were customarily made of silver, although nearly anything could be given as a gift for the occasion.

The evergreens Holly and Ivy, as well as the tree are symbols of the god Cernunnos, who along with other Egyptian deities, represents the cycles of life and mother earth.

The ancient Witchcraft festival of Yule, also celebrated on 25th December, used and indeed still uses the greenery of the Holly and Ivy as symbols of the cycle of life and mother earth.

Celebrating on pagan days, using pagan practices

The earliest reference to the celebration of Christmas is in the Calendar of Filocalus, found in an illuminated manuscript compiled in Rome in 354. The Christmas practice then continued up to the middle ages.

During the Reformation, Protestants condemned the Christmas celebrations as, "trappings of popery" and the "rags of the Beast". The catholic Church responded by promoting the festival in an even more religious form.

Following the Parliamentary victory over King Charles I during the English Civil War, England's Puritan rulers then banned Christmas (1647). Pro-Christmas rioting broke out in several cities, and for several weeks Canterbury was controlled by the rioters, who decorated doorways with holly and shouted royalist slogans. The Restoration of 1660 ended the ban, but most of the Anglican clergy still disapproved of Christmas celebrations, using Protestant arguments.

In Colonial America, the Puritans of New England disapproved of Christmas; its celebration was outlawed in Boston from 1659 to 1681.

By the 1820's, tension in England between Protestants and Catholics had eased and British writers began to worry that Christmas was dying out. They imagined Tudor Christmas as a time of heartfelt celebration, and efforts were made to revive the holiday. Charles Dickens book, 'A Christmas Carol', published in 1843, played a major role in re-inventing Christmas as a holiday emphasizing goodwill.

Yes we should, but during the feasts which God Himself ordained.

Let us explain....

Celebrations of the events in the life of Jesus are important to the practices of our Christian Faith as they serve as a reminder of who He is and the purposes of His ministry on earth. (Which concludes with His crucifixion at the Jewish Feast of Passover when He himself became the Passover lamb.)

He told us that He had come to fulfil the feasts revealed in Leviticus 23 by saying; **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them”**. Matthew 5 v 17.

Jesus was saying that He was a fulfilment of all things, including the appointed Feasts decreed by God. These Feasts take the believer from Passover in the Spring to Tabernacles in the Autumn.

So, did Jesus fulfil any of these Feasts by His birth – by becoming flesh – God dwelling with man? The answer is Yes. The Feast of Tabernacles is the Feast that speaks of this fulfilment.

Tabernacles is the final feast of the year, a feast which God says should be a **lasting ordinance**. It is the Feast of completion and a Feast during which the people are to remember that God came and dwelt with them in the wilderness. It is regarded as the greatest Feast. In Zechariah 14 v16 - 17 we are told that, when The Lord returns, all nations are commanded to celebrate this feast and there is a punishment if they don't.

We see that Jesus Himself celebrated Tabernacles from John 7 v 37.

“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink”.

In John 8 v 12 when Jews from all over the region were carrying candles into the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus said to them, **“ I am the Light of the world.”**

Therefore, we should celebrate the birth of our Lord during the feast of Tabernacles, as it was intended by God.

God goes further with his direction concerning the pagan practices of the Canaanites in Deuteronomy 12 v 31 when He says, “**You must not worship The Lord your God in their way.**” What was their way? Notwithstanding child sacrifice and sun worship, it included the worship of the gods celebrated on 25th December with the symbols of Holly, Ivy and the Evergreen Tree.

In Jeremiah 10 v 3 God speaks to the Israelites about such pagan practice, “**The customs of the peoples are worthless, they cut a tree out of the forest and a craftsman shapes it with a chisel. They adorn it with silver and gold, fasten it with a hammer and nails so that it will not totter**”.

Jesus never once mentioned changing the Laws and decrees given by God and neither do any of His disciples, including Paul, who in Galatians 4 v 8-10 actually chastises the Galatians for going back to their pagan ways.

Why then do we celebrate His birth on 25th December?

The answer is simple. This date was chosen to appease the pagans and directly oppose the Festivals God gave to The Jews, festivals that Jesus himself followed and fulfilled.

This opposition was rooted in Roman anti-Semitism and caused the Church leaders, who were appointed by the State of Rome, to move away from any form of religious practice that copied those of the Jews. Therefore God's ordained practices, namely the Levitical Festivals, from Passover to Tabernacles and, of course the Sabbath itself, were 'replaced.'

Franklin H. Littell, one of today's most respected Christian Historians said about this very issue, "It was a triumph of paganism over the Christian movement of the day and it caused the Bishops to serve the state and not the Church. It was bad for the Jews."

There is an inexhaustible amount of evidence that the early Gentile Church leaders wanted nothing to do with the Jews and their practices - which in fact are God's practices. The following is just one example of their forthright anti-Semitism:

By 135 AD the Jewish Congregations had become increasingly Gentile and Gentile leaders were therefore appointed. Ignatius was one of the first Gentile leaders (born - Syria, around the year 50 AD and died - Rome between 98 and 117). The writings of Irenaeus said that Ignatius, “argues against the Judaizing tendencies of his territory, which, not far geographically from Palestine, had suffered the influences of the Synagogue and of the Judeo Christians.” Ignatius himself wrote, “For if we are still practicing Judaism, we admit that we have not received God's favour.” He goes on to write, “It is wrong to talk about Jesus Christ and live like Jews.”

Why did God instigate the Levitical festivals for His people?

First of all let us examine the circumstances from which God initiates the Festivals to be kept by the Israelites. The Israelites had been in bondage in Egypt for a period of between 400 and 430 years. One of their major oppressors was Rameses II.

Whilst in Egypt, the Israelites were involved in the worship of the Egyptian gods. Rameses would have forced them to take part not only in the buildings constructed for worship but in the actual act itself. There were at least 80 gods worshipped by the Egyptians, the main ones being Osiris, Isis, Horus, Cernunnos and the sun gods.

The myths tell us of the rebirth of Osiris and his son Horus. The story recounts the cycle of nature and its fertility and raises Osiris as the goddess above all. All these gods had specific days and seasons set out for their worship.

The Exodus of the Hebrews is understood to be during the 15th Century BC, and they found themselves in a desert whilst being prepared to enter the Land of Canaan (where similar gods were being worshipped).

In order for God to cleanse them of any connection with these gods and to prepare them not to entangle themselves in any way with worshipping the gods of the Canaanites, God gave the Hebrews the Levitical Festivals on specific dates, dates that were not connected with the other gods, so that God's dates would be set apart to remember Him only. These dates were also to be Prophetic signs of the coming Messiah.

What does the Word of God say?

The Word tells us that:

The LORD said to Moses, "**Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.** Lev 18:1-5 (NIV)

He goes on to give them His laws in Leviticus 23 and begins the instructions by saying to Moses, "**Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.** Lev 23:1-2 (NIV)

In the First Century, the Romans were worshipping many gods but particularly mithra, isis and saturn, cernunnos and horus, as well as many other Egyptian deities. The highlight of the Roman calendar was the festival of Saturnalia, which was popular throughout Italy. Saturnalia was a time of general relaxation, feasting and merry-making. It included the making and giving of small presents, usually small dolls for children and candles for adults. There was drinking, gambling, singing, and even public nudity. It was the "best of days," according to the poet Catullus. Saturnalia honored the god Saturn and began on December 17.

The Romans also held a festival on December 25 called *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*, "the birthday of the unconquered sun." The use of the title 'Sol Invictus' allowed several solar deities to be worshipped collectively, including Elah Gabal, a Syrian sun god, Mithra and Cernunnos. December 25 was also considered to be the date of the winter solstice which the Romans called *bruma*. It was therefore the day the sun proved itself to be "unconquered" despite the shortening of daylight hours.

When Julius Caesar introduced the Julian calendar in 45 BC, December 25 was the date of the solstice. In modern times, the solstice falls on December 21 or 22.

Constantine, whose father was pagan and whose mother was Christian, brought together Christianity, Mithraism and Isis worship in an effort to unite the Empire. He made this possible by using the Bishops to make a religious decree, (Nicea, 325 AD) supported by both the Church and the state.

**Pagan dates were therefore used in favor of any
dates from the
Hebrew scriptures and pagan
practices overtook the practices taught by Je-
sus, Paul and the apostles.**

When was Jesus really born?

We must all accept that nobody knows the exact birthday of Jesus. We do, however, know certain facts that show us that He was not born on 25th December.

Most theologians would agree and, in fact, argue from examining scripture that Jesus was born during Autumn, based on the following:

- We see that the Shepherds were tending their flocks on the hillside. (Not something they would be doing in December.)
- We see in Luke 1:5-8 that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was serving in the course of Abijah in the temple. 1 Chronicles 24:7-19 shows us that there were 24 courses. The eighth course was that of Abijah and that this period of service started in early June. We can count forward to discover the dates of birth for John the Baptist, and then by deduction, Jesus (born about six months after John, see Luke 1:24-36).
- If Elizabeth became pregnant right away, and the pregnancies of both Mary and Elizabeth were normal in terms of length, John the Baptist would have been born around March, nine months after his conception in June. Jesus therefore would have been born in the month of September around the Feast of Tabernacles.

In a recently published book by Rev. Rob Richards, a Chaplain at The Anglican Retreat Centre Lee Abbey, Rob says, "I believe that Jesus could very well have been born at Tabernacles. Clearly it was not Christmas that He was born." Rob's book has a foreword by the Evangelist, J. John and Rev. Dr. Mark Stibbe, a highly-respected Church leader and teacher in our time. Mark's comments read: "I can think of no better resource. You simply cannot ignore the teaching of this book."

But does it really matter if we have completely the wrong date for Jesus' birth?

In fact, if there's no definite date, should we actually be celebrating it at all?

Yes, but.....

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Many argue that it doesn't matter when and in what season you worship God but it clearly does matter to God. That is why He gave us times and seasons not connected to paganism on which to remember Him and all that He has done for us.

Others say that Paul, in Colossians 2 v 16, tells us that we should not allow ourselves to be judged by seasons, days of the week etc. and they follow this through naively to convince themselves that Paul was speaking out against Levitical worship. What Paul was actually saying however is that our Salvation is not dependant on things of The law but only on the Grace of God through Jesus.

To conclude

We know that our salvation as repentant Christians is secure in the one who fulfils the Levitical feasts. The question now is do we fulfil them or have we gone back (as Paul says in Galatians 4 v 9) to the '**weak and miserable principles of the pagan?**'

We put it to you that within 300 years of the crucifixion of Jesus (who brought the Gentiles into a knowledge and relationship with God and who made many statements against pagan practice), the Church was ensnared by the ways of the Egyptians, the Canaanites and the pagan State of Rome.

Celebrating Christmas on 25th December is not a salvation issue, BUT it is displeasing to God, out of line with His will and has inevitably played its part in weakening the power of the body of Christ.

We believe that God has shown us The Truth in these matters and, as a result, we have chosen to embrace His word and to reject paganism. We have ceased to celebrate at Christmas and Easter and we celebrate the risen Jesus Christ in Gods own set festival days. Giving up Christmas has been and still is a really hard thing to do but we are simply walking in obedience to our Lord.

If you want to know more ... and there is plenty more to know ... please do not hesitate to contact Father's House. God Bless you.



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