

HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS

What is the true meaning of Christmas?

- The true meaning of Christmas is love.
- John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."
- The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of this incredible act of love.

What is the true meaning of Christmas?

- The real Christmas story is the story of God's becoming a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ.
- Why did God do such a thing?
 - **Because He loves us!**
- Why was Christmas necessary?
 - **Because we needed a Savior!**
- Why does God love us so much?
 - **Because He is love itself (1 John 4:8).**
- Why do we celebrate Christmas each year?
 - **Out of gratitude for what God did for us**, we remember His birth by giving each other gifts, worshipping Him, and being especially conscious of the poor and less fortunate.

What is the true meaning of Christmas?

- The true meaning of Christmas is love.
- God loved His own and provided a way—the only Way—for us to spend eternity with Him.
- He gave His only Son to take our punishment for our sins.
- He paid the price in full, and we are free from condemnation when we accept that free gift of love.
 - **"But God demonstrated His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).**

What is the origin of Christmas?

- The exact date of Jesus' birth is unknown, as the Bible does not give specifics as to the dates of either His birth or conception.
- But in the second century A.D., a Roman Christian historian named Sextus Julius Africanus calculated Jesus' birthdate to be December 25
 - **This calculation is not accepted as "fact"**
- In spite of the assumptions made in Africanus's line of thinking, the date was widely accepted.

What is the origin of Christmas?

- At that time, Roman culture already celebrated a holiday on December 25: Saturnalia, the winter solstice.
- This tradition honored Saturn, the god of agriculture, and Saturnalia was a hedonistic time celebrated with merriment, feasting, and gift giving.
- When Rome eventually instituted Christianity as the state religion in the fourth century, the Roman church converted Saturnalia to a Christian holiday in order to commemorate Jesus' birth.
- Christians have celebrated it as such ever since.

What is the origin of Christmas?

- The fact, there are many **traditions** associated with Christmas that actually began as a part of pagan culture.
- **BE CAREFUL HERE! THE INTERNET IS FULL OF TWISTED MALIGNED INFORMATION FOR EXPRESSING SELFISH POINTS OF VIEW!**
- Searching for reliable information on this topic is difficult because sources often contradict one another.
- Bells, candles, holly, and yuletide decorations are mentioned in the history of pagan worship
- However the use of such in one's home certainly does not indicate a return to paganism.
- While there are definitely pagan roots to some traditions, there are many more traditions associated with the true meaning of **Christmas—the birth of the Savior of the world in Bethlehem.**

What is the origin of Christmas?

- Bells are played to ring out the joyous news
- Candles are lit to remind us that Christ is the Light of the world (John 1:4-9)
- A star is placed on the top of a Christmas tree to remember the Star of Bethlehem
- Gifts are exchanged to remind us of the gifts of the Magi to Jesus, the greatest gift of God to mankind.

What is the origin of Christmas?

- Pope Julius I also chose December 25.
- It is commonly believed that the church chose this date in an effort to placate both Christians and non-christian citizens.
- First called the Feast of the Nativity, the custom spread to Egypt by 432 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.
- 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.

What is the origin of Christmas?

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

What is the origin of Christmas?

- The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs
- As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston.
- By contrast, in the Jamestown settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident.
- Christmas was declared a federal holiday June 26, 1870.

What is the origin of Christmas?

- It wasn't until the 19th century that Americans began to embrace Christmas.
- Americans re-invented Christmas, and changed it from a raucous carnival holiday into a family-centered day of peace and nostalgia.
- As Americans began to embrace Christmas as a perfect family holiday, old customs were unearthed.
- People looked toward recent immigrants and Catholic and Episcopalian churches to see how the day should be celebrated.
- In the next 100 years, Americans built a Christmas tradition all their own that included pieces of many other customs, including decorating trees, sending holiday cards, and gift-giving.

HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS - QUESTIONS

- Should Christians celebrate Christmas?
- Should we have a Christmas tree?
- Does giving gifts take away from the true meaning of Christmas?
- What should parents tell their children about Santa Claus?
- Is it wrong to say “Xmas instead of Christmas?

Should Christians celebrate Christmas?

- The debate about whether or not Christians should celebrate Christmas has been raging for centuries.
- There are equally sincere and committed Christians on both sides of the issue, each with multiple reasons why or why not Christmas should be celebrated in Christian homes.
- But what does the Bible say?
- Does the Bible give clear direction as to whether Christmas is a holiday to be celebrated by Christians?

Should Christians celebrate Christmas?

- What is important is not the origins of traditions, but their significance to us today as believers in the Son of God.
- December 25 was not mentioned in the biblical narrative as the day Jesus was born, and, as such, we cannot be dogmatic about it one way or the other.
- December 25th provides the opportunity for thousands of people who wouldn't go to church any other time of the year to go on Christmas day and hear the gospel of Christ.

Should Christians celebrate Christmas?

- There is no legitimate scriptural reason not to celebrate Christmas.
- At the same time, there is no biblical mandate to celebrate it, either.
- In the end, whether or not to celebrate Christmas is a personal decision.
- Whatever Christians decide to do regarding Christmas, their views should not be used as a club with which to beat down or denigrate those with opposing views, nor should either view be used as a badge of honor inducing pride over celebrating or not celebrating.
- As in all things, we seek wisdom from Him who gives it liberally to all who ask (James 1:5) and accept one another in Christian love and grace, regardless of our views on Christmas.

Should Christians celebrate Christmas?

- If you are fully convinced that you cannot, in good conscience, observe a particular Christmas tradition, do not observe it.
- If you are fully convinced that a particular tradition is too steeped in paganism to honor God in any way, by all means forsake that tradition.
- At the same time, if you are fully convinced that you can honor and worship God through a particular tradition, honor and worship God (Romans 14:5)!
- For Christians, Christmas traditions can be an important part of the celebration of the birth of our Savior, and they remind us of that momentous event that changed the world forever.

Should Christians celebrate Christmas?

- More importantly, they bring to mind the miracle of new birth He created in us when He came into our hearts, saved us from our sins, and made us children of God by the shedding of His blood on the Cross (Colossians 1:20).
- It is this amazing truth that enables us to say with the angels, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).

Should Christians celebrate Christmas?

- If not, what are you going to do to replace it?

- Remember:

Go ye therefore ...