

Is Christmas Jesus' Birthday?

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Was Jesus born on December 25th? Or Spring? Or Summer? And when did December begin being held as his birthday?

We will answer these in this video, plus give you a bonus.

INTRO 4

Most scholars believe Jesus was born about 4 B.C., and some as early as 6 B.C. But was it December 25?

The first time December 25 was mentioned as a possible birthday was in the 200s A.D., almost 200 years after his birth. A man called Hippolytus of Rome made this statement, "The first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, was December 25th, Wednesday"

We also know that December 25 was being celebrated as Jesus' birthday around 336 A.D.

Both the celebration and the year of its beginning was so far removed from the actual time that neither can be considered as credible.

It should also be noted that Christmas may be a Christian-replacement for a pagan holiday. It has been suggested that the Romans celebrated a feast called *Sol Invictus*, the "Unconquerable SUN". It marked the date of the winter solstice. So Christians devised their own celebration based on the then common designation of Jesus. SON of Righteousness. It allowed them to celebrate Jesus instead of a false god. So, Christmas on December 25 was more of a replacement celebration than the actual time of his birth.

What is known is found in the Bible, a God-breathed book mostly written before A.D. 70.

His birth was predicted more than 600 years earlier, with specifics of the town and a virgin (show Micah & Isa ref Right). Matthew said, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us)."

And Matthew recorded, “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem,”

There are strong indications in the Bible that strongly hint that it was NOT December 25. Luke wrote, Luke 2:8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” It should be remembered that Joseph and Mary were traveling to Bethlehem for a census. A census in the winter would be self-defeating.

And don't forget the relationship between John the Baptizer and Jesus, cousins about 6 months apart. Zacharias, John's father, was told by an angel during his work in the temple about his wife's upcoming pregnancy. His work was being done during the month of Abijah, about mid-June. If he went home and she became pregnant soon, John would have been born in March-April. Jesus was born 6 months later, making it September or early October.

So here is a bonus for you.

The absolute fact is this. We were not told. It is not recorded. Why? Maybe it is because his birth is not the main thing to be remembered about Jesus. Christians were instructed to “remember the Lord's death” Paul wrote, “1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, (24) and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (25) In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”

His death, burial and resurrection are far more important than his birthday.

Yes, Jesus really is the reason for the season. And he is the reason Christians have a hope of living eternally.

All of us here at Timeless Talks want you to have the very best this Christmas, and all the rest of the years too.

Thank you for watching and Merry Christmas. Ho! Ho! Ho!

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Director's Edition

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100 Thank you for watching and Merry Christmas. **(fade out with TT Logo)**. Ho! Ho! Ho!

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Notes

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Matthew 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

Micah 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Matthew 2:1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem,

Matthew 2:5-6 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: (6) “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.””

Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Matthew 2:14-15 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt (15) and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Luke 2:8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

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<https://www.gotquestions.org/December-25.html>

What is probably the first mention of Jesus' birth on December 25 dates back to the 3rd century, when Hippolytus of Rome wrote, “The first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, was December 25th, Wednesday” (Commentary on Daniel, tr. by Schmidt, T. C., 2010, Book 4, 23.3). The earliest mention of some sort of observance on that date is in the Philoclian Calendar, representing Roman practice, of the year 336.

People have put forward various reasons for the choice of December 25 for the birth of Jesus:

- 1) December 25 is nine months after March 25, which the historian Sextus Julius Africanus and the early church father Tertullian calculated to be the date of the Passover on which Jesus was conceived (see Tertullian's *Adversus Judaeos*, Ch. VIII). This reckoning was based on the tradition that Jesus was conceived and died on the same calendar day.
- 2) According to another tradition, March 25 was the anniversary of the creation of the world. Jesus' conception on that date would lead to His birth on December 25.
- 3) December 25 coincided with a pagan festival celebrating the winter solstice. The church thereby offered people a Christian alternative to the pagan festivities and eventually reinterpreted many of their symbols and actions in ways acceptable to Christian faith and practice.

December 25 has become more and more acceptable as the birth date of Jesus. However, some argue that the birth occurred in some other season, such as in the fall. Followers of this theory claim that the Judean winters were too cold for shepherds to be watching their flocks by night. History proves otherwise, however, and we have historical evidence that unblemished lambs for the Temple sacrifice were in fact kept in the fields near Bethlehem during the winter months. With that said, it is impossible to prove whether or not Jesus was born on December 25. And, ultimately, it does not matter.

The truth is we simply don't know the exact date of our Savior's birth. In fact, we don't even know for sure the year in which He was born. Scholars believe it was somewhere between 6 BC and 4 BC. One thing is clear: if God felt it was important for us to know the exact date of the Savior's birth, He certainly would have told us in His Word. The Gospel of Luke gives very specific details about the event, even down to what the baby was wearing—"swaddling clothes"—and where He slept—"in a manger" (Luke 2:12). These details are important because they speak of His nature and character, meek and lowly. But the exact date of His birth has no significance whatsoever, which may be why God chose not to mention it.

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https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_195.cfm

Not only is the exact year of Christ's birth a matter of debate, the exact date of the birth of Jesus is also something that is debated. In the western world, December 25th is the date set aside to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The early church in the West seems to have celebrated the birth of Christ on December 25th while the church in the East observed January 6th. However both of these practices did not begin until A.D. 300- much too late to be precise as to the exact date of Christ's birth.

The Birth Of Christ Was Substituted For A Pagan Festival

During that time the Romans celebrated the Saturnalia festival on December 25th. This marked the date of the winter solstice-the time when the sun would turn northward again. The feast was called *Sol Invictus*, the "Unconquerable Sun." The Christians at that time wanted to replace the pagan festivals with Christian festivals. Since the phrase "Son of Righteousness" was a common designation for Jesus, it seemed natural to celebrate this date as the birth of the Son of Righteousness rather than celebrating the Unconquerable Sun in the sky. Therefore the selection of December 25th as the date of the birth of Christ was probably a matter of substitution of the Christian festival for a pagan festival.

The Exact Date Is Unknown

The exact date of Jesus' birth is not stated in the New Testament. It is most commonly believed that Jesus was born sometime during either the fall or winter with mid-winter being a popular view. Thus December 25th could have been the exact date when Jesus was born, but there is simply not enough evidence to be certain. In the ancient world there was no universal system of chronology so precision as to when Jesus was born seems to be impossible.

What About The Flocks Outside In Winter?

One objection to the date of December 25th is that the shepherds are tending their flocks by night when the announcement comes of the birth of Christ. It is argued that it would be too cold for them to have their flocks outside in the winter. Therefore it must have been some other time of year. However, this often-used argument does not hold

much weight. There is evidence both ancient and modern that flocks stayed outside year round.

There Is Evidence That Flocks Were Outside All Year Round

There is a passage in the Jewish *Mishnah* [Shekalim 7:4] that stated that some sheep were kept outside of the fields of Bethlehem all year round. These sheep were to be used for sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem. Therefore it is possible that the birth of Jesus could have come on any day of the year.

There Is Modern Evidence Of Flocks Outside In Winter

Shepherds in the Bethlehem area, to this very day, keep their flocks out at night during all times of the year. Anyone visiting Bethlehem around Christmas time can still see the sheep outside with the shepherds.

The Birth Of Christ Could Have Been In Winter

It would, therefore, not be impossible for the birth of Jesus to have occurred during the winter season. Based upon the present evidence, a mid-January in 2 B.C. is a preferred date for the birth of Jesus. However this is by no means certain.

Summary

As there is a question as to the exact year Jesus was born, the exact day of His birth is also uncertain. December 25th was chosen as the date in the West. It seems to have come from substituting the pagan Roman festival around the winter solstice with the celebration of the birth of Christ. While it is certainly possible that Jesus was born on that date, there is not enough evidence to be precise. We do know however, that He was born sometime in the past with mid-winter 3/2 B.C. being a possible date suggested by modern scholars.

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<https://www.ucg.org/the-good-news/biblical-evidence-shows-jesus-christ-wasnt-born-on-dec-25>

History convincingly shows that December 25 was popularized as the date for Christmas, not because Christ was born on that day but because it was already popular in pagan religious celebrations as the birthday of the sun.

The biblical accounts point to the fall of the year as the most likely time of Jesus' birth.

But is it possible that December 25 could be the day of Christ's birth?

"Lacking any scriptural pointers to Jesus's birthday, early Christian teachers suggested dates all over the calendar. Clement. . . picked November 18. Hippolytus . . . figured Christ must have been born on a Wednesday . . . An anonymous document[,] believed to have been written in North Africa around A.D. 243, placed Jesus's birth on March 28" (Jeffery Sheler, *U.S. News & World Report*, "In Search of Christmas," Dec. 23, 1996, p. 58).

A careful analysis of Scripture, however, clearly indicates that December 25 is an unlikely date for Christ's birth. Here are two primary reasons:

1. We know that shepherds were in the fields watching their flocks at the time of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:7-8).

Shepherds were not in the fields during December. According to *Celebrations: The Complete Book of American Holidays*, Luke's account "suggests that Jesus may have been born in summer or early fall. Since December is cold and rainy in Judea, it is likely the shepherds would have sought shelter for their flocks at night" (p. 309).

Similarly, *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary* says this passage argues "against the birth [of Christ] occurring on Dec. 25 since the weather would not have permitted" shepherds watching over their flocks in the fields at night.

2. Jesus' parents came to Bethlehem to register in a Roman census (Luke 2:1-4).

Such censuses were not taken in winter, when temperatures often dropped below freezing and roads were in poor condition. Taking a census under such conditions would have been self-defeating.

Given the difficulties and the desire to bring pagans into Christianity, "the important fact then . . . to get clearly into your head is that the fixing of the date as December 25th was a compromise with paganism" (William Walsh, *The Story of Santa Klaus*, 1970, p. 62).

If Jesus Christ wasn't born on December 25, does the Bible indicate when He was born?

The biblical accounts point to the fall of the year as the most likely time of Jesus' birth, based on the conception and birth of John the Baptist.

Since Elizabeth (John's mother) was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:24-36), we can determine the approximate time of year Jesus was

born if we know when John was born. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple during the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). Historical calculations indicate this course of service corresponded to June 13-19 in that year (*The Companion Bible*, 1974, Appendix 179, p. 200).

It was during this time of temple service that Zacharias learned that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child (Luke 1:8-13). After he completed his service and traveled home, Elizabeth conceived (Luke 1:23-24). Assuming John's conception took place near the end of June, adding nine months brings us to the end of March as the most likely time for John's birth. Adding another six months (the difference in ages between John and Jesus) brings us to the end of September as the likely time of Jesus' birth.

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