

Put Christ back into Christmas?

It's a common complaint of Christians these days that Christmas has become so commercialized and that we need to get back to what Christmas is truly all about. "We need to put Christ back into Christmas" is the common thought. Is this possible? What are the origins of Christmas? What is Christmas really all about?

Christmas was ordained by the Roman Catholic Church as a mass for Christ to celebrate his birth. "The Christian festival of Christmas was celebrated in Rome by AD 336." (Encyclopedia Britannica) Why did they pick December 25? Does scripture reveal this was Jesus' birthday? Actually, the scriptures do not give a date of Jesus' birth. The only evidence of the timing of his birth is the scripture that says the shepherds were out in the field at night time when he was born. (Luke 2:8) This had to be either spring, summer or fall as the shepherds took their flocks into shelter during the winter. So apparently December 25 was not the date of His birth. Most scholars believe he was born in the fall. Why was December 25 picked as a date to celebrate His birth?

History reveals the most common religion in the Roman Empire the first few centuries after the death of Christ was Mithraism. It was the religion followed by those who worshiped the sun god Mithra, who was said to be born on December 25.

The Encyclopedia Britannica states about Christmas, "The traditional customs connected with Christmas have developed from several sources as a result of the coincidence of the celebration of the birth of Christ with the pagan agricultural and solar observances at mid-winter. In the Roman world, the Saturnalia (December 17) was a time of merrymaking and exchange of gifts. December 25 was also regarded as the birth date of the Iranian mystery god Mithra, the Sun of Righteousness. On the Roman New Year (January 1), houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and gifts were given to children and the poor. To these observances were added the German and Celtic Yule rites when the Teutonic tribes penetrated into Gaul, Britain, and central Europe. Food and fellowship, the Yule log, and Yule cakes, greenery and fir trees, gifts and greetings all commemorated different aspects of this festive season."

All of the celebrations of Christmas including the date of December 25th came from the pagan celebrations and religions. The Roman Church led by the emperor Constantine was willing to bring these practices into Christianity and assign them as the worship of Jesus. None of the Christmas practices are scriptural. The reality is, the Roman Catholic Church merged paganism into Christianity to make Christianity more acceptable to the nations and peoples they conquered. Christ never was in Christmas, which makes it impossible to put him back in it.