

WHAT IS CHRISTMAS?



I approach every subject that I research like a detective preparing a case to present to a jury. One little item of evidence may not mean much, but when numerous pieces of evidence are placed together, they give a conclusive answer to the puzzle. That's what I have always tried to do. From each bit of evidence I have discovered in God's Word and in history, I truly believe that Jesus Christ was not born on December 25th.

Piece of evidence number ONE:

Luke chapter one describes the angel appearing to Zacharias to inform him that his wife would bear him a son, which would be John the baptist. It reads:

Verse five reads, *"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, **of the course of Abia**: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth."* Verse eight reads, *"And it came to pass, **that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,**"* Verse eleven, *"And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Verse thirteen, "But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*

The clue in this scripture is when Zacharias was **executing the priest's office**. Verse 5 tells us that he was **"of the course of Abia."** We need to go to 1st Chronicles chapter 24 to determine when this period of time is. This scripture explains the time of year that each person was to "execute the priest's office" that we read of in Luke chapter one.

Verse one reads, *"Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. When we come to verse ten, we read, "The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah."*

Here, we see that “course of Abia” (previously referred to in scripture as “Abijah”) is designated on the **eighth lot**. This “eighth course” falls in **Mid-June**, or the **month of Tammuz** on the Hebrew calendar. That would mean that John the Baptist was conceived in mid-June, and would have been born in mid-March. We all know that Christ was born **six months later**, which could not have been any later in the year than **mid-September**.

Piece of evidence number TWO:

John’s Gospel is very suggestive that the day Christ was born was in fact the Feast of Tabernacles, the 15th of Tishri, which occurs in our September-October. John uses the unusual word “tabernacled” to describe the birth of Christ in John 1:14, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” That “dwelt” in the original Greek (“skenoō” pronounced “skay-no’-o”) means “tabernacled.” John would certainly be in a position to know Jesus’ birthday and it is probable that he is hinting at the Feast of Tabernacles as the actual date in this passage. This evidence from John 1:14 may indicate that Jesus was born on the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall of the year. Interestingly enough, the 15th of Tishri in the year Christ was born fell on the 15th of September on our modern calendar.

Piece of evidence number THREE:

Christ was exactly thirty-three and a half years of age at his death on the Jewish Feast of Passover. Christ partook of the Passover feast the week He was crucified. His age at the time of His death would correspond precisely to His birth date on the fifteenth of Tishri on the Jewish calendar, the Feast of Tabernacles.

Piece of evidence number FOUR:

The nation of Israel was instructed by God to celebrate seven “Feasts” each year. Leviticus 23:44 reads *“And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the Lord.”*

The seven feasts appointed by the Lord were: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. There is a theme for each feast. For instance, the Feast of Passover commemorated the deliverance of the Hebrew people from the “destroyer” that passed over their blood-sprinkled homes as he slew the firstborn of every creature not protected by the blood. This event foretold the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on Calvary.

I know this explanation is kind of long and drawn out, but it is critical to understanding the secrets hidden in scripture regarding the “Feasts of the Lord” practiced by Israel. The Biblical text and historical fact will bear out the following facts regarding the Feast of Passover, which is practiced on the 14th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar every year. Nisan falls during the months of March and April on our calendar. To demonstrate why these Feasts are so important, here are six days in Israel’s history that fell on the 14th of Nisan, none of them by coincidence!

1) God made a covenant with Abraham regarding the Promised Land. This occurred on the 14th of Nisan. Genesis 15:18 states *“In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying,*

Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”

2) The Passover supper was eaten in preparation of the exodus on the 14th of Nisan. Exodus 12:41 reads *“And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.”*

3) The first Passover was celebrated in Canaan and the Covenant was renewed on the 14th of Nisan. In Joshua chapter 5 and verse 11 we read *“And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day, And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn.”*

4) The Book of Law was discovered and re-affirmed under Joshua on the 14th of Nisan. One of the things that Joshua did in obedience to God was to immediately celebrate the Passover Feast on the 14th day of Nisan. 2nd Chronicles 34:14 reads *“And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses.”*

2nd Chronicles 34: 31 then reads *“And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.”*

This took place on the 14th of Nisan, the Feast of Passover.

5) The next event that took place on the 14th of Nisan was the dedication of the second Temple. When the Jewish captives returned to Jerusalem under the decree of Cyrus in 536 B.C., they found the Temple burnt to the ground. In 520 B.C., the Israelites began to rebuild the Temple. After five years of hard work, the Temple was finished in the month of Adar, which is during February/March on our calendar. On the 14th of Nisan in 515 B.C., the Jewish people dedicated the new Temple under Ezra, the high priest. Ezra chapter 6:15-19 reads:

*“And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses. And the children of the captivity **kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.**”*

6) Of course, the last significant date in Israel's history that occurred on the 14th of Nisan is the Last Supper, with the new covenant being offered by Christ. 1st Corinthians 11 tells us what Christ instructed Christians to do till He comes again. It reads:

“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”

The point I am trying to demonstrate here is that each Feast had a theme. In order to expedite my little bits of evidence here, I will use one more example of the “themes” used in the Jewish holidays.

The 9th of Av (July/August on our calendar) was “The Fast of Mourning.” We read about this celebration (if you can call it that) in Zechariah 7:4-5, which reads:

“Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?”

The “theme” of this day of fasting, known as “Tisha Be-Av,” is a day of mourning and remembrance of Israel's loss. There are eight significant events that have occurred to the Nation of Israel on this specific date, 9th of Av. They are:

- 1) The twelve spies returned with their report, Israel loses faith, and is condemned to die in the wilderness.
- 2) Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians on the 9th of Av in 587 B.C.
- 3) The second Temple was leveled and burned by the Romans on the 9th of Av in the year 70 A.D.
- 4) On the 9th of Av in 71 A.D., the Roman army plowed Jerusalem with salt.
- 5) On the 9th of Av in 133 A.D., Simeon Bar Cochba's army was completely destroyed.
- 6) England ordered that all Jews be expelled from the country on the 9th of Av in the year 1290 A.D.
- 7) Spain ordered the expulsion of all Jews from their country on the 9th of Av in 1492 A.D.
- 8) On the 9th of Av in 1914 (July 28th), World War One was declared, and Russia launched persecutions against the Jews in eastern Russia.

You can see why I believe in the correlation of certain events in Jewish history and the celebrations assigned to the Jewish Nation by God. Now let's go directly to “The Feast of Tabernacles,” which is celebrated on the 15th of Tishri in the Hebrew calendar, which always falls during the September/October months on our calendar.

The theme of the Feast of Tabernacles was “the coming of the presence of the Lord.” The most important date in Jewish history on this date was the dedication of Solomon’s Temple in 1005 B.C., which is described in 2nd Chronicles 5:2-3. It reads:

*“Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king **in the feast which was in the seventh month.**”*

It is because of this theme on the 15th of Tishri that I believe strongly that Jesus Christ was born on that date. Again, John’s Gospel suggests that date by using the unusual word “tabernacled” to describe the birth of Christ in John 1:14. Like I mentioned before, the 15th of Tishri in the year Christ was born fell on the 15th of September on our modern calendar.

We all know the seven year countdown to Armageddon begins when the antichrist orchestrates a peace treaty between Israel and the Arab nations. I believe that when Christ returns in glory with the Saints, exactly seven years later, that day will fall on the 15th of Tishri. Granted, no one knows when the rapture will occur when Christ calls his people into the air, but it must occur prior to the signing of the treaty. If we recognize that Christ’s return occurs exactly seven years after the antichrist signs his pact with Israel, after that event occurs anyone with a Bible and a calendar will be able to calculate exactly when Christ will return with His saints in glory to walk through the gate of the rebuilt Temple to reign for one thousand years on earth. It will be exactly seven years after that peace treaty is signed.

Piece of evidence number FIVE:

The information given in Luke 2:8 about the “*shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night,*” indicates that it could not have been in late December because the cold weather would force the flocks and the shepherds to take shelter during that season.

Piece of evidence number SIX:

December 25th had originally been the pagan Winter Solstice Festival, which had been taken over by the Christians to promote their new faith. In doing so, many of the old pagan customs crept into this new Christian celebration.

The Greeks became prominent in about 1100 B.C. and ceased to exist in 323 B.C., when Alexander the Great died. Most historians agree that the Greek culture was completely enveloped by the Roman Empire by 146 B.C. Anyone with a history book can look back to see that the Greeks celebrated numerous holidays to “the gods.” One of those celebrations was “Brumalia” a pagan festival held at the Winter Solstice. The word *bruma* meant simply "shortest day," and referred to the Winter Solstice. According to historians, Brumalia was generally held on

December 25th, even though that was not technically the actual solstice. Brumalia honored Dionysus, and included drinking and merriment.

Historians all agree that this celebration to the Greek gods is where most of the traditions originated that are followed today during the Christmas season. Included in this Brumalia celebration was the giving of gifts, decorating homes with wreaths and holly, and cutting down pine trees, anchoring them to a base, placing them in the home, and decorating them with ornaments. But let's not rely solely on history. Let's look at God's word.

Jeremiah wrote about this very practice in 600 B.C. In Jeremiah's words, penned by God, he warns the Jews not to get caught up in this tradition of decorating a evergreen tree with ornaments in their homes. Jeremiah 10:2-4 states, *"Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."*

Jeremiah here is most likely referring to the holiday of Brumalia, which was already occurring on December 25th of the pre-Julian calendar. This is 600 years before Christ was born! When the Greek culture was swallowed up by the Romans, this practice was integrated into the Roman celebration of "Saturnalia." Anyone with a limited knowledge of Roman history is aware that this was one of the most important holy days of the Roman culture. Saturnus was the god of seed and sowing. The god "Saturn" was the "god of agriculture." There is one celebration, the "Feast of Sol Invicta," that was added in 274 A.D. to the Saturnalia holiday. Sol Invicta was the "Unconquered Sun God" of the early Roman culture.

The reason an evergreen tree is used is because it signifies eternal life (never turning brown). The Bible refers to the evergreen tree being used as a idolatrous form of worship in Jeremiah 3:6, which reads, *"The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot."*

Christian historians vehemently insist that the early church celebrated the Lord's Supper exclusively, and there was resistance, especially in the eastern churches, to celebrating Christ's birth on December 25th. This continued into the 4th century. In 336 A.D., the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine, made the decision to combine the celebration of Christmas with the celebrations of Brumalia and Saturnalia. The date of Christ's birth was moved to December 25th! The church officially recognized December 25th as Christ's birthday in the year 354 A.D. The Emperor Justinian, who ruled from 527 to 565 A.D., is the one who declared December 25th as an official holiday to commemorate Christ's birth. The Roman church declared the "Mass of Christ" in the year 1038 A.D. The name given to "Christmas (Christ-Mass)" alone signifies where the holiday came from, the Roman church.

During my research, I also discovered where the imaginary figures of Santa Clause, Mrs. Clause, and the helper elves, came from. “Oden” was the ancient Chief god in Greek mythology. Odin rode on a white eight legged horse and delivered either presents or punishments, and was part of the Brumalia celebration. The eight legged horse may be the origins of the eight reindeer that we know of today, along with the naughty or nice list that is constantly checked. The Dutch also internalized the gift giver myth into their culture. They dubbed the man Sinter Klaas. He has become an imitation of Christ in our culture today. If you think about it, the following list concerning Santa is strikingly similar to our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1) He is the giver of gifts (Christ gives the gift of life)
- 2) He sits on a throne (So does Christ)
- 3) He bids children to come to him (So did Christ)
- 4) Tells children to obey their parents (So did Christ)
- 5) Has supernatural elves (Christ has angels)
- 6) Santa is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent (So is Christ)
- 7) Santa is ageless (So is Christ)
- 8) Santa is a carpenter (So was Christ)
- 9) He comes at night (Christ comes as a thief in the night)
- 10) Says “Ho, ho, ho.” (So does the Lord)

I'll bet that last one has you wondering! If you look closely at Zechariah 2:6, it reads:

Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord.

Ancient Greek mythology describes the “helpers” who accompanied Oden in the workplace. There were two kinds of elves, the beautiful Light Elves, or Ljosalfar, who lived on high with the God Freyr, and dwarf-like Dark Elves, or Dopkalfar, who lived underground or in deep forests. In effect, these “elves” are an imitation of the angels in heaven and the demons who have been cast out. These elves were eventually integrated into the Santa folklore sometime during the Roman culture.

In Roman mythology, we find a close likeness to Mrs. Clause in one of their female gods,” Ops.” She is Saturnus' wife and sister, so they about the same age. You might recall that Saturnus is the Roman god of seed and sowing. She is an Earth Mother. She has white hair and fits the mold of Santa’s wife. Ops was joined to the god Oden sometime during the Roman influence.

The Romans also worshipped a female god called “Artemis Diana, the Queen of Heaven.” Red holly is a symbol of the menstrual blood of Diana. The white berries and mistletoe are symbols of the semen from the Roman sun god, Apollo. Kissing under the mistletoe allowed the spirit of the sun god to enter the participants of the spit swapping.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was declared to be the "Mother of God" by the Christian church in the 5th century at Ephesus, Turkey. Ephesus was the home of a magnificent temple to the Goddess, Artemis Diana, whose title was "Queen of Heaven". The Christian church also conferred the Goddess's title on the mother of Jesus. They called Her, "Mary, Queen of Heaven" and "Mary, Queen of the Angels."

I have just not been able to find anywhere in God's word or in accurate historical documents that the Lord Jesus was born on December 25th. In fact, there is so much evidence to the contrary, that I am convinced the He was born sometime in September or October, probably on the 15th of Tishri.

And yet, Christians have been drawn into this celebration, putting up trees, decorating their homes, giving gifts, and deceiving their children about a "false god," Santa Claus. Until I researched this subject, I was unaware of what is actually being celebrated at Christmas time. I would guess that God is not too happy with his children who practice this "tradition."