

THE OBSERVING OF CHRISTMAS (PART II)

"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." (Gal. 4:9-11)

CHRONOLOGY OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Many are simply ignorant of the teaching of the Bible concerning the birth of Christ. It is a shame for parents to read fictitious stories to their children and call them "Bible Stories". Parents, be sure the story is true to the Book before you call it a "Bible Story".

Jesus' Birth--Matt. 1:25, Lk. 2:1-7	<u>NEWS & NOTES:</u> The meeting at Carter
Visit of Shepherds (same night)	City has come to a close
Lk. 2:8-20	with bro. Bolton doing the preaching
Jesus' Circumcision (8 days old)	We rejoice in that two made
Lk. 2:21	confession of sin and were restored.
Jesus' Presentation (at least 40	Our thanks for the use of the
days after birth Lev. 12:2-6)	Load congregation's building and
Luke 2:22-38	the presence of many area brethren
Visit of Wise Men--Matt. 2:1-12	in showing the slides of our
Journey to Egypt--Matt. 2:13-15	labors in India.
Male Children Killed--Matt. 2:16-18	
Return To Nazareth--Lk. 2:39	

Read the Bible account in that order. Remember that the wise men and the shepherds were not the same. The shepherds visited the child Jesus the night of His birth but the wise men traveled from the East (they did not travel by plane but by plain) and did not arrive until, at least after the presentation in the temple which was at least 40 days after the birth. The wise men found Jesus in a "house" (Matt. 2:11). The Scriptures do not say how many there were. Three gifts do not indicate only three visitors. To conclude so, is just as silly as saying there were only three guests at a party where a person received money, perfume and cologne. There could have been two men or many.

CAN THE BIRTHDAY OF CHRIST BE KNOWN?

Listed below are some of the supposed dates of Christ's birth given by men who lived in the first and second centuries. (Ency. Britt.)

Clement: Nov. 17, 3 B.C.	*****
Ambrose: Jan. 6	*
Babylonian Chronicals: April 19-20	* <u>ORDER OF SERVICES</u> *
Clement of Alexander: May 20	* Lord's Day: 10:00 a.m. Worship *
Author of Latin Tract: "De Pascha	* 7:00 p.m. Worship *
Compatus" Wed. March 28	* Thursday: 7:00 p.m. Bible Study *
Ananias of Shiral: "On Sunday, Jan.	*****
6th as that is the day the world began"	

The encyclopedias further tell us that celebrating His birthday was not among the earliest festivals of the church:

Catholic Encyclopedia: "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church. In the Scripture, sinners alone, not saints celebrated their birthdays." (The sinners referred to are Pharoah and Herod. Gen. 40:20 and Matt. 14:6)

"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 17:5, 18:2-4)

Encyclopedia Americana: "It was according to many authorities not celebrated in the first centuries of the church, as the Christian usage in general was to celebrate the death of a person rather than their birth. In the 5th century the Greek Church ordered it to be observed forever on the day of the old Roman feast day of the birth of Sol, as no certain knowledge of Christ's birth existed."

HOW WE GOT Dec. 25

"Dec. 25 at the time of the Roman Empire was held by many pagans as a birthday of their sun god, Sol Invictus, and they would worship him by lighting candles and fires to encourage him to return." (Can A Christian Celebrate Xmas, Bolton, p. 5)

In England, it is recorded that, "the ancient pagan people of Angli began the year on the 25th of December, called in their tongue "Modranecht", that is "modern night" by reason we suspect of the ceremony which in that night long vigils they performed". (Ency. Britt.)

In the south of Europe, in Egypt, and in Persia the sun gods were worshipped with elaborate ceremonies at the season of the winter solstice as a fitting time to pay tribute to the benign god of plenty, while in Rome the Saturnalia reigned for a week.

One must realize that at this time (2nd-3rd centuries) most of the people of the Roman Empire had these pagan customs imbedded in their culture and thus when Constantine ordered Christianity to be a state religion thousands upon thousands of pagans were baptised bringing these customs with them into the Church. Nor was the Church very desirous of separating truth from error insomuch that she wisely chose the 25th of Dec. as a day for pagans to worship Christ rather than the sun. Note the two following quotes:

"To minimize the importance of pagan festivals that lingered in the early centuries following the birth of Christ, the early Christian leaders turned this into a holy day. In the Roman Julian calendar Dec. 25th was figured on as the day when the "sun was born". On this day the light lengthened and the sun's rays became warmer and the chill of winter would soon leave. In order to convert vast multitudes of non-believers from their worship of the sun to reverence for Him who was also the Son was the reason the early Christian leaders chose the present date for His birthday." (News Leader, Christmas Comes From Pagan Past)

"The transition from paganism to Christianity was gradual but became apparent after the fall of Rome in 476 when the Church was the one organization which had the strength and wisdom to withstand the disorganized centuries of the dark ages. During this time great progress was made by Christian leaders in extending the faith. (Hummmmmmm)

When the missionaries were sent from Rome to the outlying provinces in 601 A.D. their instructions given by pope Gregory made clear the policy of the Church. "Let the shrines of idols by no means be destroyed. Let water be consecrated and sprinkled in the temple, let altars be erected so that the people, not seeing their temples destroyed, may displace error and recognize and adore the true God... And because they were wont to sacrifice oxen to devils some celebration should be given in exchange for this...they should celebrate a religious feast and worship God by their feasting so that still keeping outward pleasures, they may more readily receive spiritual joys." (Bende's Encyclopedia, History Of The English Nation)

FLOCKS IN THE FIELD: You may no doubt remember that the flocks were still in the fields at the time of Christ's birth. (Ek. 2:8) According to Clark's Commentary Vol. 5, p. 386 the flocks were kept inside barns during the months of mid Oct. to mid March as the December weeks of Palestine were too severe for them to remain in the open fields and unprotected from the rain, wind and frost. Note also Matt. 24:20 for a reference to the severity of Palestinian winters. Like I said, What will you be doing around the 25th of December?