

## ***When Was Jesus Born?***

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**A**ny standard Bible encyclopedia will affirm that the observance of Jesus' birth on December 25 is founded upon conjecture and tradition.

"Authorities are not agreed concerning the precise date of Christ's birth. Neither is there agreement concerning the time at which the celebration of Christmas actually began in the churches. Clement of Alexandria, toward the close of the 2nd century A.D., cites diverse views concerning the date of Christ's birth among early churchmen ... By the end of the 4th century, the eastern churches had adopted special services commemorating jointly the birth of Christ, the adoration of the Magi, and Christ's baptism by John. Apparently, these services were held at first on January 6, but later were divided between December 25 and January 6.

"Augustine points to the prevailing tradition in the 5th century among western churches ... 'For He is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also He suffered ... But He was born according to tradition upon December the 25th'" (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 804).

This information, however, is of little import to those who have their hearts set on celebrating the birth of Christ. The reasoning usually goes, "The exact day of His birth is not important. What matters is that we celebrate it." But isn't this apparently sincere sentiment merely an assumption? The reason we do not know the day of Jesus' birth is that God didn't reveal that information. If God had wanted the birth of Christ to be celebrated, He would have stipulated the day and given the appropriate instructions.

A sincere desire to honor Christ is not the issue. Sincerity is no substitute for obedience. The Bible teaches many times over that those who willfully depart from the Scriptures, no matter how sincere, are in violation of God's law (e.g., Lev 10:1-7). The deeper issue is respect for the authority of the word of God.

The birth of Christ was a pivotal day in human history and is to be treasured in the heart of every Christian along with every other aspect of Jesus' life. But the appointment of a special day of worship accompanied by practices which originated with pagan festivals is simply presumptuous, self-willed religion.