

Christmas Traditions

On the other side of this sheet are references relative to Christmas traditions and their origin.

How do the following Scriptures bear on our view and practices relative to these traditions?

We will not have time to discuss all of these. Do you have a preference? Send me a text: 832-722-9969.

1. **Mk 7:5-8; 2Tim 3:4; Mt 7:21-23** - Human traditions as worship?
2. **Col 3:9; Mk 7:22; Pro 22:6** - Lying? Deceit? Training children?
3. **Tit 2:12; 1Pt 4:3** - Xmas parties; New Year Eve parties?
4. **Mal 3:7-8; 2Co 8:4-5; 9:7** - Spending ...affect on contribution?
5. **2Co 4:2; 1Th 2:3; 2Tim 4:4; Mt 28:18-20** - Things that are taught about Christmas?
6. **Mt 15:13-14** - Contributions to Salvation Army? United Way? etc.
7. **1Co 8:9-13** - Other peoples consciences?
8. **Heb 3:13; 10:24-25; Lk 14:2-25,33** - Missing assemblies?
9. **Lk 2:10-14** - Sing "Joy to the World"; "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"?
10. **1Co 11:23-25** - What did Jesus institute as a repeated memorial and what did it focus on?

Dictionary of Cultural Literacy.

Christmas...The holiday kept by Christians on December 25 to mark the birth of Jesus... For centuries, the holiday has combined *secular* and *religious* traditions. The *religious traditions* include Nativity stories, carols, midnight services on Christmas Eve, and decorating a crèche or Nativity scene. The *secular traditions* include Santa Claus, giving gifts, feasting, and children's stories, songs, and poems like "The Night Before Christmas." (*italics mine, srf*)

Charles Panati, *Panati's Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things* (Harper & Row, 1989) pp. 67-68

The idea to celebrate the Nativity on December 25 was first suggested early in the fourth century, the clever conceit of church fathers wishing to eclipse the December 25 festivities of a rival religion...Mithraism... On December 25, pagan Romans...celebrated Natalis Solis Invicti, 'Birthday of the Invincible Sun God,' Mithras...By A.D. 274, Mithraism was so popular with the masses that Emperor Aurelian proclaimed it the official state religion...Thus, to offer converts an occasion in which to be pridefully celebratory, the Church officially recognized Christ's birth. And to offer head-on competition to the sun-worshippers' feast, the Church located the Nativity on December 25. The mode of observance would be characteristically prayerful: a mass; in fact, Christ's Mass.

Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia (1994) article on "Christmas":

The origin of the festival is unknown. Scholars believe that it is derived in part from rites held by pre-Christian Germanic and Celtic peoples to celebrate the winter solstice. Christmas festivals, generally observed by Christians since the 4th century, incorporate pagan customs, such as the use of holly, mistletoe, Yule logs, and wassail bowls. The Christmas tree, an evergreen trimmed with lights and other decorations, is derived from the so-called paradise tree, symbolizing Eden, of German mystery plays. The use of a Christmas tree began early in the 17th century, in Strasbourg, France, spreading from there through Germany and then into northern Europe.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia (Van Rees Press, New York, 1929), p. 211:

Christmas (O.E., *Christes Maesse*, Christ's Mass) or FEAST OF THE NATIVITY, 25 Dec., celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Our Lord. *In the earliest days of the Church there was no such feast . . . The Latin Church began c. 300 to observe it on 25 Dec., though there is no certainty that Our Lord was born on that day . . . Many peculiar customs of the day are the outcome of the pagan celebrations of the January calends. The Christmas tree, of which the first known mention was made in 1605 in Strasborg, was introduced into France and England in 1840.*" [*italics mine, srf*]

Manger scenes? *The Catechism Explained* (Benziger Brothers, New York, 1899), p. 710:

In the Middle Ages, before the invention of printing had placed Holy Scripture within the reach of the people, it was customary to present to their view the chief events of Our Lord's life in theatric representations. For instance, St. Francis of Assisi [1182-1226, srf] obtained the Papal permission to construct a stable of brushwood and moss in the midst of a pine-wood. In it he placed a real manger in which was laid an image of the divine Infant, while figures representing Mary and Joseph stood beside it. A real ox and an ass were tied up to a stall outside the stable; inside an altar was erected, at which at midnight the Christmas Mass was solemnly celebrated . . . From that time forth the custom of making a crib in churches began to prevail. [This article goes on to discuss how "passion plays" grew out of this. srf]