

When Was Christ Born?

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To the surprise of many, the Bible does not give the month of the birth of Christ, neither does it give the day on which Christ was born. Albert Barnes, noted Presbyterian commentator, says with reference to the shepherds keeping their sheep in the field:

"The climate was mild, and, to keep their flocks from straying, they spent the night with them. It is also a fact that the Jews sent out their flocks into the mountainous and desert regions during the summer months, and took them up in the later part of October or the first of November, when the cold weather commenced. While away in these deserts and mountainous regions, it was proper that there should be someone to attend them to keep them from straying. It is probable from this that our Saviour was born before the 25th of December, or before what we call Christmas. At that time it is cold, and especially in the high and mountainous regions about Bethlehem. But the exact time of His birth is unknown; there is no way to ascertain it."

Collier's Encyclopedia concurs with Mr. Barnes when it says: "It is impossible to determine the exact date of the birth of Christ, either from the evidence of the gospels, or from any sound tradition."

The Catholic Encyclopedia also has some interesting comments on this subject: "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church."

Why December 25th?

Liberious, bishop of Rome (and it should be remembered that the Catholics considered him one of their early popes), in 354 A.D. ordered that December 25th be adopted. Many think this was to counter the long established pagan festivals which centered on the worship of the Sun at the time of the winter solstice. Christmas, then, did not originate by the authority of God. None of the apostles ever celebrated the birthday of Christ; nor was anyone ever instructed to celebrate His birthday in the Bible.