

So why Dec 25?



It seems like just one year ago, we were getting ready for Christmas... because we were! Funny how that works.

When I think through what question I should cover for these “Question of the Month” articles, I try as hard as possible to come up with something that isn’t necessarily typical or too ordinary. I also generally minimized “Top 10” type questions, such as, “If God created the universe, who created God?”, “Where did all the water go after the flood?”, and “What about all the ape-men?” Those are good questions, and I have addressed those (and many others) in past Questions and some of our resources.

The question I’ve chosen for this month, admittedly, at least in my mind, falls into the category of “Top 10ish” type questions. However, I don’t want to assume that everyone already knows the answer, so I decided to share it for whatever it’s worth. It shouldn’t just be trivia; it should always be a benefit regarding evangelism.

So why do we celebrate Christmas on December 25? Because that’s when we’re told Christmas is. (Realistically, that’s actually true for most people.) But the more important question is, “Why do they say it is December 25?” Do we actually know December 25 is the date of the birth of Christ? Nope. Does it really matter? Some may disagree with me, but my answer is, “Not really.”

Historically, we do not have a record of the actual date Jesus was born; honestly, we aren’t even sure exactly what year it was! I know for an absolute fact it wasn’t year “0” because there is no such year. (We go from 1 BC to 1 AD). Scholars have debated for quite some time, but their answers range from 2-6 BC. It seems like most conservative scholars say 4-6 BC. (I read it on the internet, so it must be true! 😊) One limiting factor is found in Matthew 2:1

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem (NKJV).

From other historical records, we learn that King Herod died in 4 BC, which would limit the birth of Christ to that year or before, which is consistent with the 4-6 BC range.

If we don’t know the date (let alone the year), why did we settle on December 25? The first mention of this date (as far as we can tell) comes from 3rd century Rome. This date was chosen for a number of reasons, two of which are as follows:

- A tradition holds that Jesus was conceived and crucified on the same calendar day. According to some historians and early church fathers, March 25 was the Passover during which Jesus

was conceived. That is also nine months prior to December 25, the date we now celebrate His birth.

- Constantine, who converted to Christianity in 312 AD, is claimed to have commandeered the pagan celebration of the Feast of the Unconquered Sun, which happened to be on December 25. Choosing this date was to greatly serve in turning the focus away from paganism, towards the God of the Bible.

The second of these two reasons (involving Constantine) is very interesting and “common knowledge” among many people. However, it is not well supported. For example, there is evidence of December 25 being recognized as the birth of Christ before Constantine, which would preclude this being used as valid evidence.

The first reason (related to the assumed date of conception) is the most reasonable and is the main reason why today we celebrate Christmas on December 25. With that said, we still don’t really know when Jesus was born.

Imagine this scenario. A son is born to a very wealthy family of immense royalty. As he grows, he is granted a high level of honor, the best education, special privileges, and a massive financial inheritance. In return, this child (and later adult) is extraordinarily benevolent and gracious. Many years pass, and somehow it is determined that the date everyone thought represented his birth was not necessarily correct. It might have been slightly different. Everything else they believed and experienced, however, was true. Would the response of the people be to strip him of his royalty, riches and power, publicly ridicule him, and work very hard to shame others into rejecting him altogether? I don’t think that response would make any sense.

Unfortunately, we are living in a world today that cares very little about reason and rationality. It’s all about feelings and self-interest. It’s all about equality, as long as the ruling class is more equal than others!

Along these lines, some choose to reject Jesus (and Christianity in general), because, you know, we don’t even really know when Jesus was actually born! Well, how can you possibly argue with that sound piece of logic? Very easily, but those posing this objection generally aren’t interested in answers. They much prefer simple catch phrases and alleged “gotcha” questions. Sadly, these “gotcha” questions work for them way too often. When the skeptic does run into a biblically literate Christian who has answers, they typically just change the topic to one of the other “go-to” stumpers, such as. “Well, why is there so much suffering in the world? If God existed, and is as good as you say, he would never allow it!”

I’m running out of space for this article, so let me finish with this. You could ask the skeptic, “If we actually knew for sure Jesus was born on December 25, would you ask Him to forgive your sin, turn your life over to Him, and worship Him as your Lord and Savior?” Most likely, their response would be, “No.” I would then say, “Well, I guess the exact birthdate of Jesus isn’t really your issue. Tell me, what are your top reasons for rejecting Jesus as your Savior?” You’ll want to ensure that if you are

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able to address those questions, it will make a significant difference to them. Otherwise, they are just blowing a smokescreen and honestly prefer to live according to their own standards, rather than submitting to the standards of their Creator (who was born sometime around December 25, or some other day of the year! 😊).

So, put the question of the exact date of Jesus's birth on the back burner and focus more on your personal relationship with Him (and how you can share your faith with others this Christmas season).

Merry **CHRIST**mas!

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#)!