



Sunday – December 24, 2023

The Lakeland Hills Leader

Lakeland Hills church of Christ

2510 Lakeland Hills Blvd
Lakeland, FL 33805
(863) 688-4336

Schedule of Services

Sunday

9:00 AM Bible Study
9:50 AM Worship
6:00 PM Worship

Wednesday

7:00 PM Bible Study

Visit our Website:

www.lakelandhillschurchofchrist.com
For Sermon & Class outlines,
Bible Study Materials and
Other Information.

Visit our Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/LakelandHillschurchofchrist for events,
information, and links to our
YouTube Archives

Visit us on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCu7AG_3JUpBDIr2NPqB3iw for
Live Streams and Video
Archives.

Elders

Bob Marschall
Leon Miller
Larry Wisdom

Deacons

Bucky Day
Sherman Johnson
Michael Sadler
David Williams

Evangelist

Chuck Kozens

"The First Christmas"

Author: Steve Klein

It comes as a surprise to many religious people that the celebration of Christmas as the birth of Christ is completely and totally of human invention. God's word never tells us when Christ was born, never calls His birth Christmas, and never commands that the birth of Christ be celebrated by His followers.

The Catholic Church rightfully takes credit for establishing Christmas as a religious celebration. Recently I re-read the article on "Christmas" in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, which is a large reference work produced by Catholic scholars (It can be viewed online at www.catholic.org/encyclopedia). The article contains several eye-opening truths about Christmas which we would do well to ponder. The following points are my observations from the encyclopedia article, each followed by a related quotation from the article.

- **The word Christmas was not even invented till the 11th century A.D.** "The word for Christmas in late Old English is *Cristes Maesse*, the Mass of Christ, first found in 1038, and *Cristes-messe*, in 1131."
- **Church leaders in the first few centuries did not sanction the celebration of the birth of Christ.** "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists of feasts; Origen. . . asserts that in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthday."
- **Early celebrations of the birth of Christ were considered strange and were not done on December 25th.** "The first evidence of the feast is from Egypt. About A.D. 200, Clement of Alexandria says that certain Egyptian theologians 'over curiously' assign, not the year alone, but the day of Christ's birth, placing it on 25 Pachon (20 May). . ."
- **December 25th was not celebrated as Christ's birthday until the 4th century.** "At Rome the earliest evidence is in the Philocalian (an illustrated calendar, sk) compiled in 354."
- **December 25th was chosen because it was also the date of a popular pagan holiday.** "The well-known solar feast, however, of Natalis Invicti, celebrated on 25 December, has a strong claim on the responsibility for our December date." Pagans celebrated December 25th as the rebirth of the sun. On this day that the sun reversed its southward retreat and proved itself to be unconquered. Some connected the rebirth of the sun to the birth of Jesus.
- **Virtually all Christmas traditions had their origins either in pagan practices or in Catholic tradition.** Regarding "Cards and presents: Pagan customs centering round the January calends gravitated to Christmas."

God has given Christians great personal liberty in areas where He has not given us a specific law to follow. For instance, we may choose to eat meat or we can be vegetarians. We may keep days, or not keep them (Romans 14:2-6). If an individual wishes to recall the birth of Christ and express joy regarding the event, surely, he is free to do so any time. Giving gifts, displaying colored lights,

and eating a big meal with family are also things that we are at liberty to do on any day of the year. However, celebrating December 25th as if it were in fact the birthday of Christ, equating this birthday with something called Christmas, and generally behaving as if God has ordained December 25th to be the holiest day of the year, is misguided to say the least.

How easy it is to replace true spirituality with the inventions of men. On every street corner we see men who know little more of God's Son than what they hear and see around Christmas – much of which is false and has no Bible basis.

Celebrating Christmas as the birth of Christ provides at best a dim unsatisfying copy of the grace, love, charity, joy, hope and fellowship that the Lord wants us to experience every day of the year.