

# Why is December 25th the day Christmas is celebrated

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## 1 Introduction

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The origins of Christmas seem to be relegated to a spot of "birth of Christ" despite our lack of detailed knowledge of when he was born - and so I decided - to seek a journey of inquisition in which I hoped to learn something interesting from the origins of Christmas.

## 2 Why December 25

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Why is December 25 of all dates considered to be the birth of Christ, let's delve into the middle of the third century, the Roman empire is in a state of plugging one leak by causing another and when local governors do something by themselves their troops hail them emperor starting civil war, the empire has been split in 3 and despite the efforts of Claudius, the previous emperor, the new man in charge, Aurelian, found himself in charge of a dying empire, which he restored, this man, Aurelian, set a precedent of no longer following the old Pagan Gods, deciding to follow a deity that could be relatable to anyone in some form, the sun, through a deity called sol invictus.

On the 25th of December he built a temple in this God's honor in Rome initiating games that from then on would be held on the 25th, this seems to be a reason for the date that is often agreed upon, though there is also the theory that it has something to do with the winter solstice and "birth from nothing" at the beginning of the yearly cycle of the sun.

It seems that maybe in fact it's both, at some level, with sol invictus's events being on the 25th in the first place because of the timing of the winter solstice.

## •How did this get associated with the birth of Christ then?

Well, not all churches even have the date of the 25th but for the vast majority that do perhaps we need to look no further than Constantine the Great's time (him being the man that began the conversion of the empire to Christianity) and which moved to at first to associate himself with deities such as sol invictus as well. At this time it seems celebrating the 25th of December as the birth of Christ came into existence in the 330s, though for a while there still would be many dates which have since mainly disappeared, such as the 28th of March, 3 days after the vernal equinox when the sun was to have been created. [1] [2] [3]

## References

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- [1] Steven Hijmans. *Sol Invictus, the Winter Solstice, and the Origins of Christmas*. Mouseion, 2003.
- [2] *Giacobbe Giusti, Sol Invictus, Roman empire*. Mouseion, 2009.
- [3] Mike Duncan. *Award winning podcast The History of Rome*. (T)HOR, 2012.