

# CHRISTMAS

Christmas or Christmas Day (Old English: Crīstesmæsse, meaning "Christ's Mass") is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ is observed most commonly on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration among billions of people around the world. A feast central to the Christian liturgical year, it is prepared for by the season of Advent or the Nativity Fast and initiates the season of Christmastide, which historically in the West lasts twelve days and culminates on Twelfth Night;[13] in some traditions, Christmastide includes an Octave. Christmas Day is a public holiday in many of the world's nations, is celebrated culturally by a large number of non-Christian people and is an integral part of the holiday season, while some Christian groups reject the celebration. In several countries, celebrating Christmas Eve on December 24 has the main focus rather than December 25, with gift-giving and sharing a traditional meal with the family.



## HISTORY

The Christian ecclesiastical calendar contains many remnants of pre-Christian festivals. Although the dating as December 25 predates pagan influence, the later development of Christmas as a festival includes elements of the Roman feast of the Saturnalia and the birthday of Mithra as described in the Roman cult of Mithraism. The Chronography of 354 AD contains early evidence of the celebration on December 25 of a Christian liturgical feast of the birth of Jesus. This was in Rome, while in Eastern Christianity the birth of Jesus was already celebrated in connection with the Epiphany on January 6. The December 25 celebration was imported into the East later: in Antioch by John Chrysostom towards the end of the 4th century, probably in 388, and in Alexandria only in the following century. Even in the West, the January 6 celebration of the nativity of Jesus seems to have continued until after 380.

In 245, Origen of Alexandria, writing about Leviticus 12:1–8, commented that Scripture mentions only sinners as celebrating their birthdays, namely Pharaoh, who then had his chief baker hanged (Genesis 40:20–22), and Herod, who then had John the Baptist beheaded (Mark 6:21–27), and mentions saints as cursing the day of their birth, namely Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:14–15) and Job (Job 3:1–16).[56] In 303, Arnobius ridiculed the idea of celebrating the birthdays of gods, a passage cited as evidence that Arnobius was unaware of any nativity celebration. Since Christmas does not celebrate Christ's birth "as God" but "as man", this is not evidence against Christmas being a feast at this time. The fact the Donatists of North Africa celebrated Christmas may indicate that the feast was established by the time that church was created in 311.

Many popular customs associated with Christmas developed independently of the commemoration of Jesus' birth, with certain elements having origins in pre-Christian festivals that were celebrated around the winter solstice by pagan populations who were later converted to Christianity. These elements, including the Yule log from Yule and gift giving from Saturnalia, became syncretized into Christmas over the centuries. The prevailing atmosphere of Christmas

has also continually evolved since the holiday's inception, ranging from a sometimes raucous, drunken, carnival-like state in the Middle Ages, to a tamer family-oriented and children-centered theme introduced in a 19th-century transformation. Additionally, the celebration of Christmas was banned on more than one occasion within certain Protestant groups, such as the Puritans, due to concerns that it was too pagan or unbiblical. Also Jehovah's Witnesses reject Christmas celebration.