

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Christ-mass

Who added “mass” to “Christ”? Today, we often hear the cries of religious minded people moaning that Christ has been removed “Christmas” in our secular-minded society. Who put Christ in Christmas in the first place? People following Christ ask, “Is the word ‘Christmas’ from ‘heaven or from men’ (cf. Matthew 21:25)? Neither did God the Father, the Son-Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, angelic heavenly hosts, or Jesus’ chosen apostles ever add “the mass” to Christ.

It is over 300 years after Jesus lived and died that we have the word “mass” entering our vocabulary. In the Latin form “*missa*,” the word meant “to send away.” It was connected with the “*Eucharist*” -the Lord’s supper - in the Roman Catholic Church. While the word “mass” pointed to dismissal, it soon incorporated all the facets of the Eucharist service, remembering the Lord’s death by “giving thanks over” and “partaking of the sacred elements.” So, originally the word “mass” was connected to remembering Jesus’ death.

The word “mass” originates with the Roman Catholic Church in the West, because the Eastern Orthodox Church uses the term “liturgy,” not “mass” for

commemorating the “Eucharist” in their worship services.

In the same period of time of “mass” being introduced to the religious world, we see the word “Christmas” appearing. It commemorates the birth of Christ, no longer just His death. It is not the first century when the faith was once and for all delivered (*Jude 3*), but over three hundred years later when men, not God, added “mass” to “Christ.”

It is not until the 12th. Century when “Christmas” first entered into our English language. It went from the form “*Cristes masse*” (two distinct words) in A.D 1123 to the familiar word-form “Christmas” in A.D. 1568. While the form of the word was changing, the meaning of the word was anchored upon the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

A strong cult of sun worshipers occupied Rome during the third century. Pagans commemorated December 25 as the “*Birthday of the Unconquered Sun*.” In the winter solstice, days of sunlight began to lengthen, and darkness continued to diminish. In the days of the Roman Emperor Aurelian (270-275 A.D.), he dedicated December 25 as the special day for Romans to honor the “sun-god.”

Pope Julius I (337 – 352 A.D.) determined December 25

as the date for Jesus’ birth based upon the winter solstice. On our calendar, the day in which the earth’s poles are at their maximum tilt from the sun is December 21. This is the longest 24-hour period for darkness in the Northern Hemisphere. According to the Julian Calendar which preceded our own, the winter solstice was on December 25.

The Scriptures reveal the time for Jesus’ birth as when the shepherds were “*abiding in the field*” and were “*keeping watch by night over their flock in the field*” (*Luke 2:8*). It was the custom for shepherds to send their sheep to the open fields about the time of Passover. They would remain for the summer and be brought back after the first rain which usually occurred in October. Adam Clark, considering this practice, comments that Jesus could not have been born on “the 25th. day of December or after September with flocks still in the field by night” (*Adam Clark; Vol. V, p. 370*).

The Roman Catholic Church added “Mass” to Christ to commemorate his birth, which just happened to be the day idolatrous pagans commemorated the birthday of their “sun-god.” None of which is revealed in God’s Word or authorized from heaven.