

The Four words of Christmas

Noel

This is a word we see all over the Christmas season. Songs like “the first noel” are sung. The word noel appears on cards and on the windows of shops. This word is French, yet its roots go way back to the Latin word Natalis. It means Birthday in Latin. The French adapted it to mean Merry Christmas. I have seen Noel on billboards and woven into Christmas lights. It’s a very popular word for Christmas.

I said in the Christmas word study that the practice of Christmas began in the fourth century. Historians say that Natus Christus started to appear around this time. The song 1st Noel was published around 1823. However, there are signs that this tune was created before that date. As with many histories, we don’t really know who wrote it. Noel has also been attributed to a girl’s name.

So, what exactly is Noel? It is a name for Christmas. Christians celebrate Jesus birthday on December 25th. It makes sense that someone created a song called the 1st noel. It also makes sense that noel means birthday. It’s interesting how words come and go over the years. They even change meaning. Yet, Christmas and noel have remained the same. Some of the oldest Christmas songs originate in the 18th century with Silent Night and Good King Wenceslas. Noel has deep roots.

Noel is obviously old language. In English today we just say Christmas. Yet, all over the world we have different words to describe Christmas just like the French noel. Albania say the

word Krishtlindje. Spanish say Navidad. How about German Weihnachten. I find it interesting that there are other words for Noel. Sometimes certain languages don't have a word to describe an English translation. One thing for sure is that Noel or Christmas has some sort of meaning all over the world. Different words have been made to describe happy birthday or merry Christmas. Jesus birth is world renown. Sometimes, at Christmas, it shows up in the word Noel.