

The Four words of Christmas

Christmas

It's pretty simple. There is Christ and mas. The Christ is Jewish. The savior predicted in the Old Testament of the Bible is called the Christ or Messiah. This man would come from the line of Adam, Abraham, and David. In Christian terms they appoint the term Christ to Jesus. Merry Christ day was appointed as Jesus birthday in accordance with the winter solace on the Roman calendar (December 25th).

The other word is mas or mass. It means to gather. However, this word goes deeper. It is attached to the Eucharist. This word Eucharist is the celebration of Jesus last meal drinking wine, eating bread, and singing hymns. Jesus said to do this together (gathered) in remembrance of him. So, on December 25th Christians gather to remember the birth of the Christ. It literally is a Christ gathering in remembrance.

They say that the first Christmas day was December 25, 336 A.D. To us, we have always had Christmas. Yet, traditions are formed over many years. It's interesting that many of them came through pagan festivals and other cultural special days. Christmas is celebrated in different ways all over the world. Yet, its origin comes from Jewish beginnings of a long-awaited Christ. Christ-ians say this person was Jesus. This is not the Jewish way although Jesus and his first followers were Jewish.

Did you know that Christmas was not common after the first Christmas? A controversy arose between the early church. One side said Jesus was of God. The other side believed Jesus

was created by God. Our traditions do come from gatherings. They were called councils in the early days of the first few centuries. Christmas comes from an argument and final understanding of who Jesus claimed to be. The basic argument is in the form of a question: is Jesus the Christ of God? Since that time, several churches have branded traditions to honor the council decision that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. He was also born as a human baby named Jesus. Christmas celebrates and remembers this event.

The event. Jesus was not born on December 25th. Some things in the Bible are not known or told. Jesus is remembered on the 25th of December. Last week we talked about Advent. In conjunction to Advent there are different calendars from some ancient cultures. The Christian church decided in 567 A.D. to commemorate the Christmas period with 12 days running from December 25th to January 5th. In some European traditions Christmas falls on January 5th. However, you can see all of this played out during our North American Christmas period going from 12 days before December 25th to New Years and beyond. Our traditional Christmas period is a mixing of calendars and dates.

The Advent part is just a period of honoring the Christmas gathering. Some people fast (not eat) during this period. Other traditions light candles. Next week we will talk about the Nativity. This is another part of the Christmas tradition. Like I said, traditions are fostered over the years. Sometimes we don't even know why. The point is that from different perspectives and cultures we have Christmas. Within that we now have decorating trees and hanging stockings. Yet, for many, it's a time of reflection on the birth of Jesus the Christ. We (mass) gather in churches, communities and homes in his name to honor the birth of the Christ child, savior of the world on Christmas day.