**Christmas**

Every year on December 25, we celebrate Christmas, a day for spending time with family, observing an important Christian holiday, partaking in lighthearted traditions, or just spreading some holiday cheer! Christmas has evolved over several millennia into a worldwide celebration that’s both religious and secular and chock full of fun-filled, family activities.

## History of Christmas:

Traditionally, Christians claim Christmas as the day on which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born. And although many of our Christmas Day rituals and traditions evolved from that singular moment, that’s not the whole story. Although there are myths and truths about Christmas, let’s unpack what we do know.

The fact is that no one knows the exact time and place of Jesus’ birth. In the Bible’s New Testament, apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John share similar stories but they never actually name the date of Jesus’ birth. December 25 is largely attributed to the first Christian historian, Sextus Julius Africanus, around 221 A.D.

In one view of why December 25 was chosen as the official date for Christmas, historians believe the early church wanted to link the Son of God’s birth with the “rebirth of the sun,” which arrives after the winter equinox. A second view bases the date around Jesus’ date of conception on March 25, at the spring equinox. December 25 would then be the date of Jesus’ birth exactly nine months later.

At one point, the Church designated January 6 as Jesus’ baptismal date and the correct date for Christmas. But by the 9th century, Christmas was observed only as a minor holy day.

By the Middle Ages, Europeans created some of the Christmas customs we recognize today. In Strasbourg, apple-decorated fir trees appeared in homes. During the 17th and 18th centuries, people started to give gifts as symbolic of the Magi arriving in Bethlehem with offerings for the newborn baby Jesus. By the 19th century, fir wreaths laden with 24 candles representing the 24 days before Christmas were later reduced to a much safer four candles. Eventually, Christmas Day traditions spread beyond Europe to Latin and North America and other places around the world.