



the Christmas fable & the birth of Jesus

“Let's put Christ back in Christmas”

and

“Jesus is the Reason for the Season”

THE CHRISTMAS FABLE*

*fable = story with mythical beings, objects that are alive

the **word** - Christmas



First found in 1038 - Cristes Maesse, the Mass of Christ
Later, in 1131, as Cristes-messe

A mass – normally associated with the Eucharist – the death of Jesus
A **Catholic** mass – and **Protestants** have no issue with this?

the **date** of Christmas

What do we know?

25th December is the accepted day in the West

6th January was another option for a while, mostly in the East

“Inexplicable though it seems, the date of the [Messiah’s] birth is **not known**. The Gospels indicate neither the day nor the month,”

- The New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 3, p. 656.



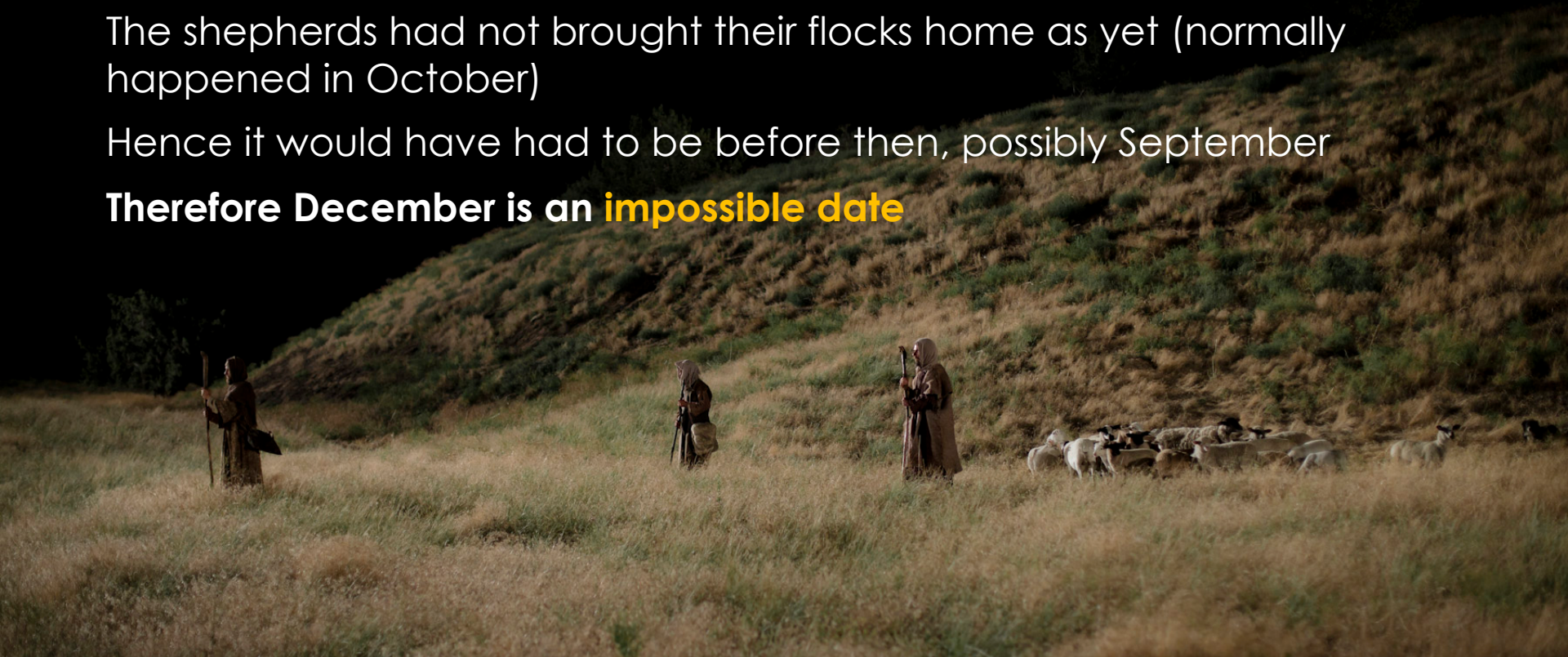
the **date** of Christmas – issues

Announcing the birth of Jesus, the angels appeared to shepherds on the hills outside Bethlehem

The shepherds had not brought their flocks home as yet (normally happened in October)

Hence it would have had to be before then, possibly September

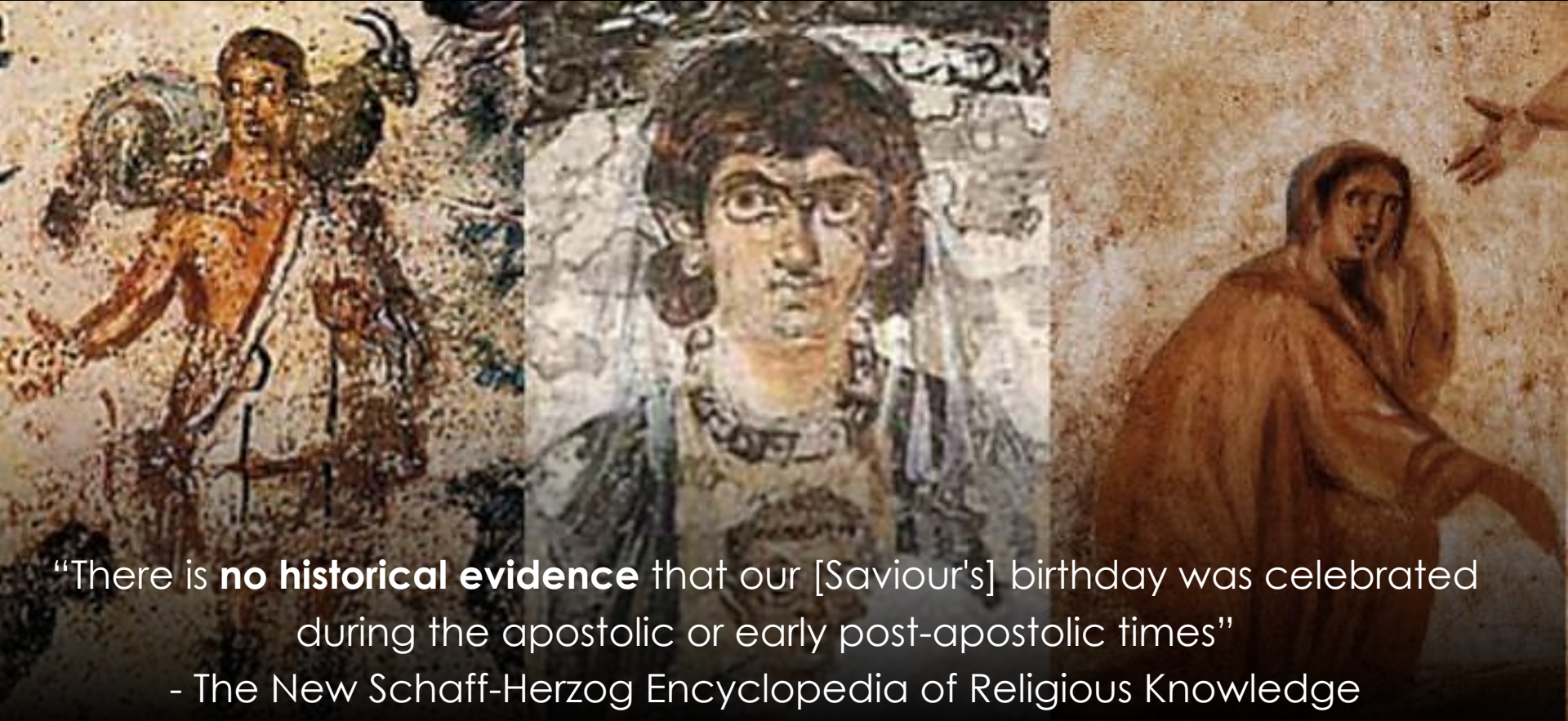
Therefore December is an impossible date



when did this birth-
celebration begin?

lets check what early
Christians did...

did the early believers celebrate the birth of Jesus?



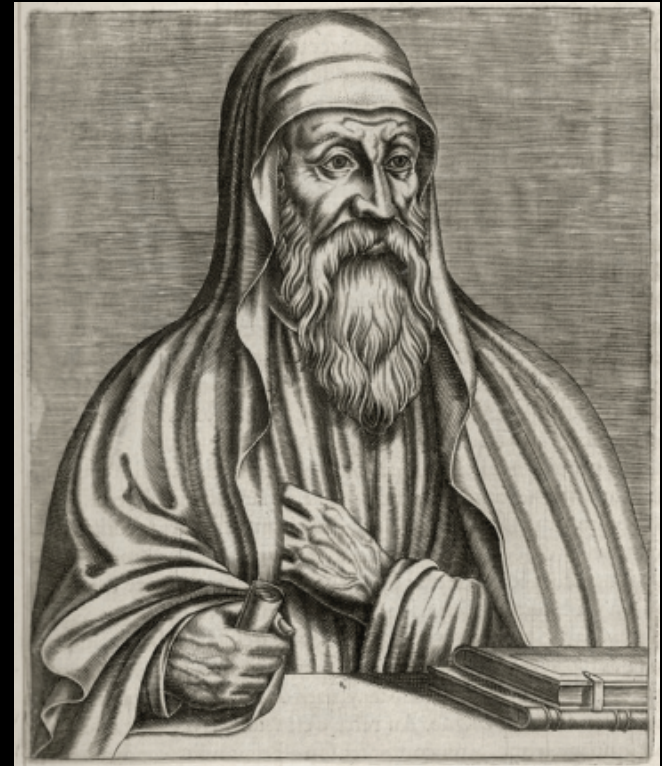
“There is **no historical evidence** that our [Saviour's] birthday was celebrated during the apostolic or early post-apostolic times”

- The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge

did the early believers celebrate the birth of Jesus?

"The fathers of the first three centuries do not speak of any special observance of the nativity. No corresponding festival was presented by the Old Testament ... the day and month of the birth of [the Messiah] are nowhere stated in the Gospel history, and cannot be certainly determined,"

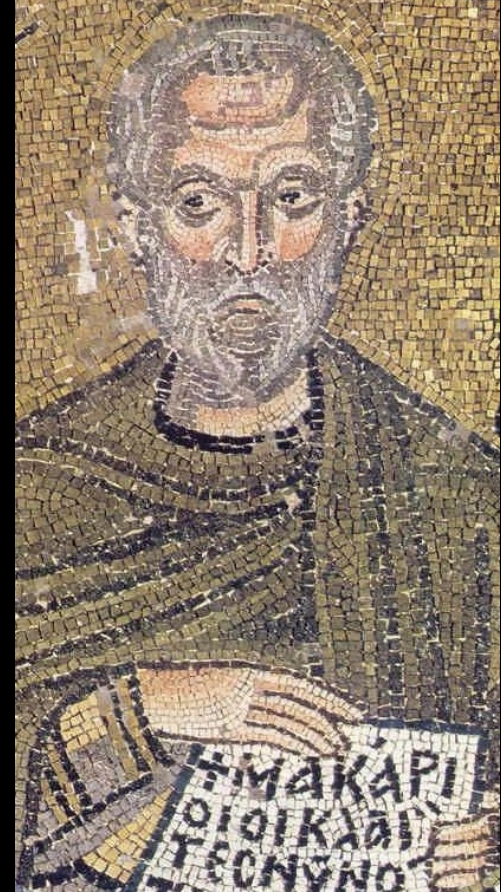
- Christmas, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, John McClintock and James Strong



did the early believers celebrate
the birth of Jesus?

“Christmas was **not** among the
earliest festivals of the Church.
Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it
from their lists of feasts”

- Christmas, Catholic Encyclopedia



the first Christians
didn't celebrate the
nativity

but it went even further... they didn't even celebrate *any* birthdays

"of all the holy people in the Scriptures, **no one** is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his birthday. It is only sinners (like Pharaoh and Herod) who make great rejoicings over the day on which they were born into this world below"

- Origen, in Levit., Hom. VIII, in Migne P.G., XII, 495

"The day [Christmas] was **not** one of the early feasts of the Christian church. In fact the observance of birthdays was condemned as a heathen custom repugnant to Christians"

- The American Book of Days, George W. Douglas



even if the date is wrong,
what's the issue with
remembering Christ's birth
on 25th December?

if it **was** required, why is the
Bible silent on this matter?

surely it is not an oversight



we need to go **back** in time

ancient sun gods were celebrated
on or around the 25th December



Attis (Phrygian)

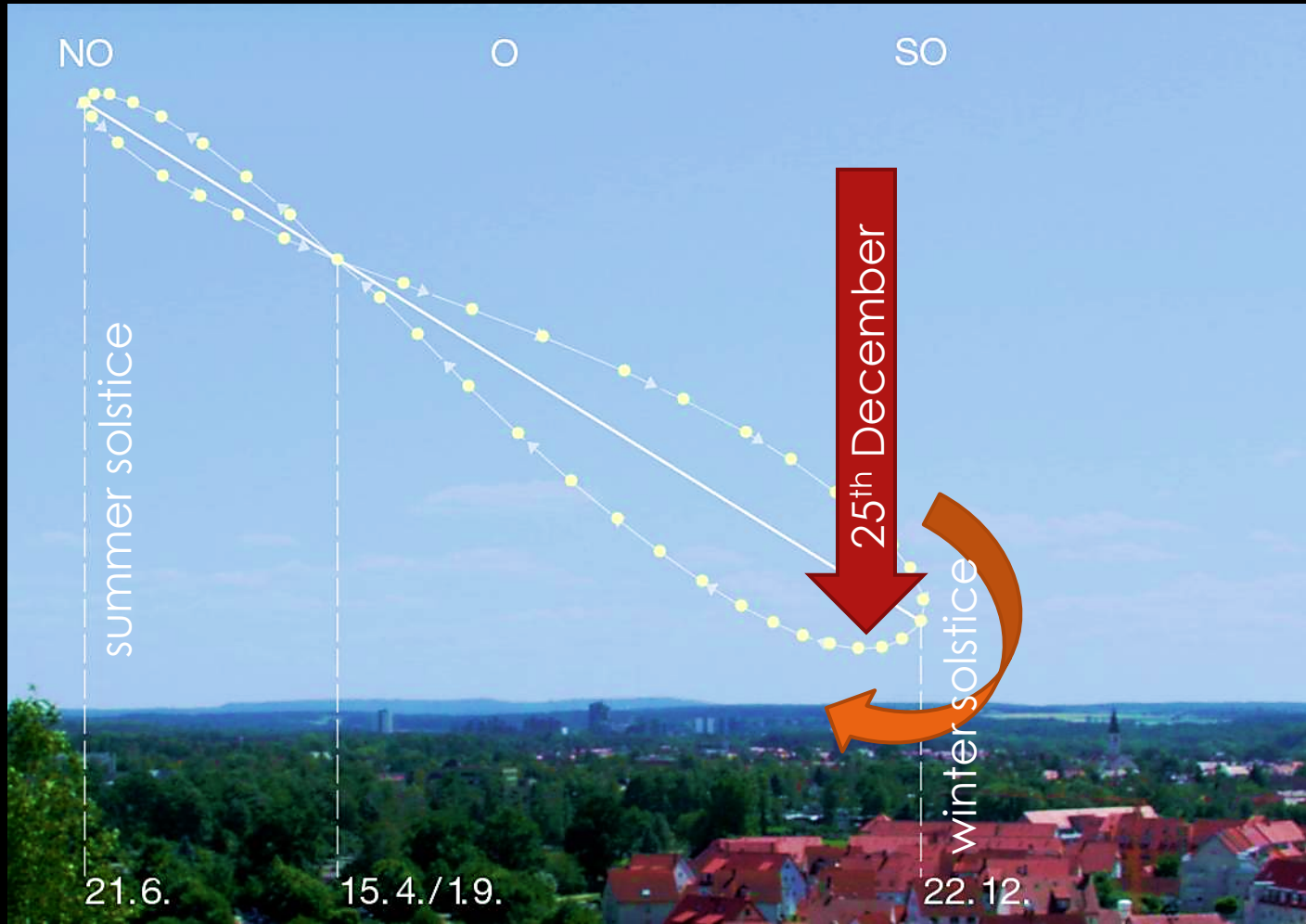


Helios (Grecian)



the lunar god Aglibôl, the
supreme god Beelshamên,
the sun god Malakbêl
(Syria & Near-East)

the sun in the Northern hemisphere



Mithra



Mithraism

Persians had a deity – **Mithra** – a god of light
[Mitra in India, Mithras in Rome]

Roman soldiers brought Mithraism back to
Rome during Pompey's military campaign
against Cilician pirates around 70 BC

The religion eventually migrated from Asia
Minor through the soldiers into Rome and the
far reaches of the Empire



Mithraism

Syrian merchants brought Mithraism to the major cities, such as Alexandria, Rome and Carthage

Captives carried it to the countryside

By the third century AD Mithraism and its mysteries had permeated the Roman Empire and extended from India to Scotland



>420 Mithraic sites in Europe & Middle East

Mithras – the force behind the zodiac



Mithras kills the sacred bull
watched by the sun god Sol
and the moon goddess Luna



Mithras banquets with the
sun god Sol

the Roman twist...Sol Invictus



the Roman twist...

The **public** cult of Sol Invictus, the Invincible Sun, was related to the **private** Mithraic cult

Became the official religion of the empire In 274 AD when the Roman emperor Aurelian made it an official cult alongside the traditional Roman cults



and the “birthday” of the
Unconquerable Sun was on...

25th December just after the winter solstice of the Julian calendar
It was the day of the Nativity – the nativity of the SUN



Syncretism at its best...

"The birth of Christ was assigned the date of the winter solstice (December 25 in the Julian calendar, January 6 in the Egyptian), because on this day, as the Sun began its return to northern skies, the pagan devotees of Mithras celebrated the Dies Natalis Solis Invicti (Birthday of the Invincible Sun).

On December 25, 274, [Roman Emperor] Aurelian had proclaimed the Sun God the principal patron of the Empire and dedicated a temple to Him in the Campus Martius. Christmas originated at a time when the cult of the Sun was particularly strong at Rome."

The New Catholic Encyclopaedia: Vol. III, p.656, 1967 ed.



Emperor Aurelian – as the sun king



Saturnalia – the *reason* for the season

“the best of days” - poet Catullus

ancient Roman festival in honour of the deity Saturn
held on 17th December & later expanded with festivities through to 23rd



Saturnalia – the weeklong binge party before the 25th

The holiday was celebrated with a sacrifice at the Temple of Saturn, in the Roman Forum, and a public banquet, followed by private gift-giving, continual partying, and a carnival atmosphere that overturned Roman social norms: gambling was permitted, and masters provided table service for their slaves. Figs, nuts, dates and other dainties were showered on the people. Homes decked in holly and greenery.





Priest of Saturn: "During My week the serious is barred; no business allowed. Drinking, noise and games and dice, appointing of kings and feasting of slaves, singing naked, clapping of frenzied hands, an occasional ducking of corked faces in icy water—such are the functions over which I preside."

this could be expected of a
pagan emperor...

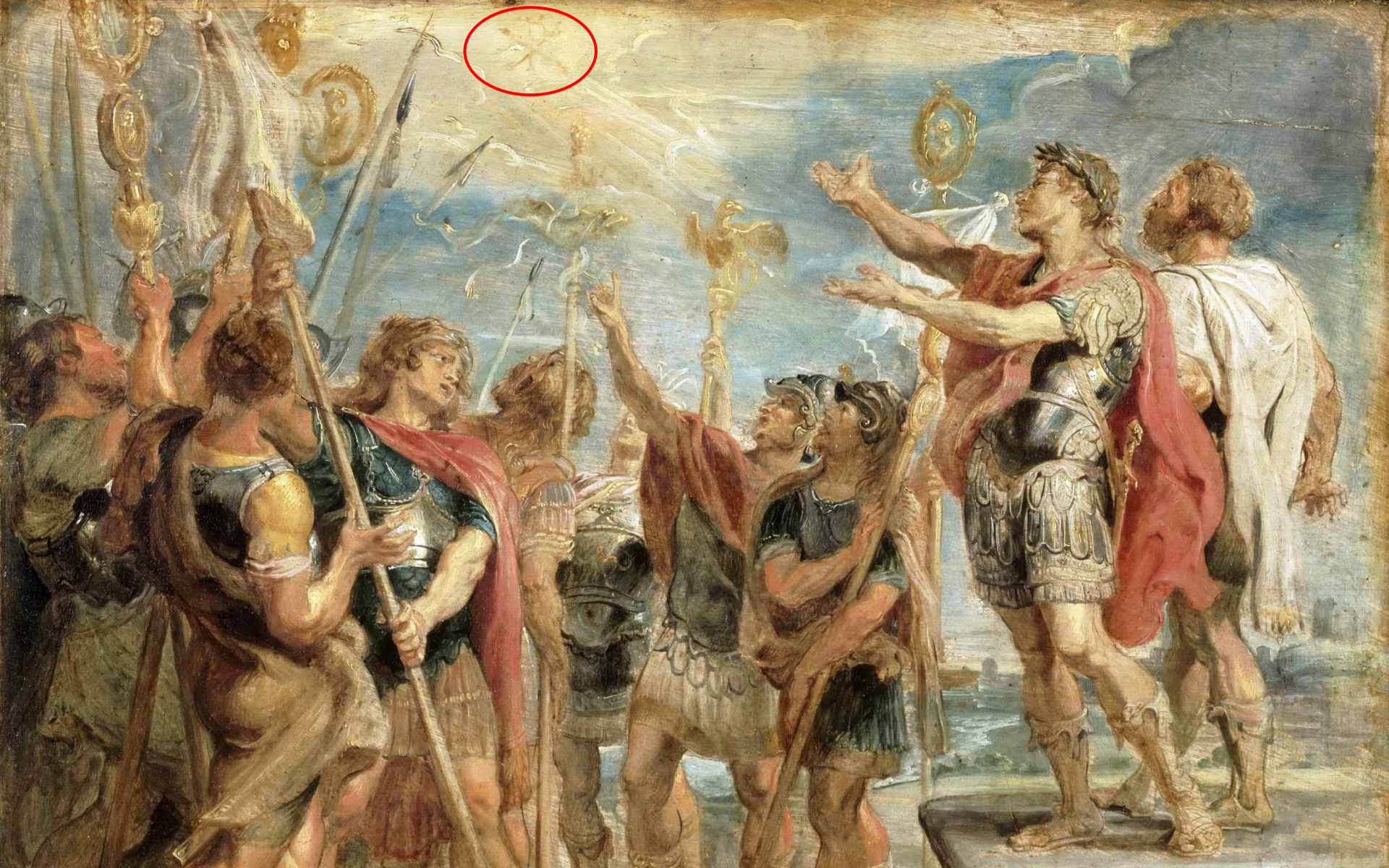


...but what if the
emperor was
supposedly
“Christian”?

the Battle of the Milvian Bridge

took place between the Roman Emperors Constantine I and Maxentius
on **28th October 312 (winter)**







Mother **Helena** & Son **Constantine**

The first “Christian”
Empress and Emperor of Rome



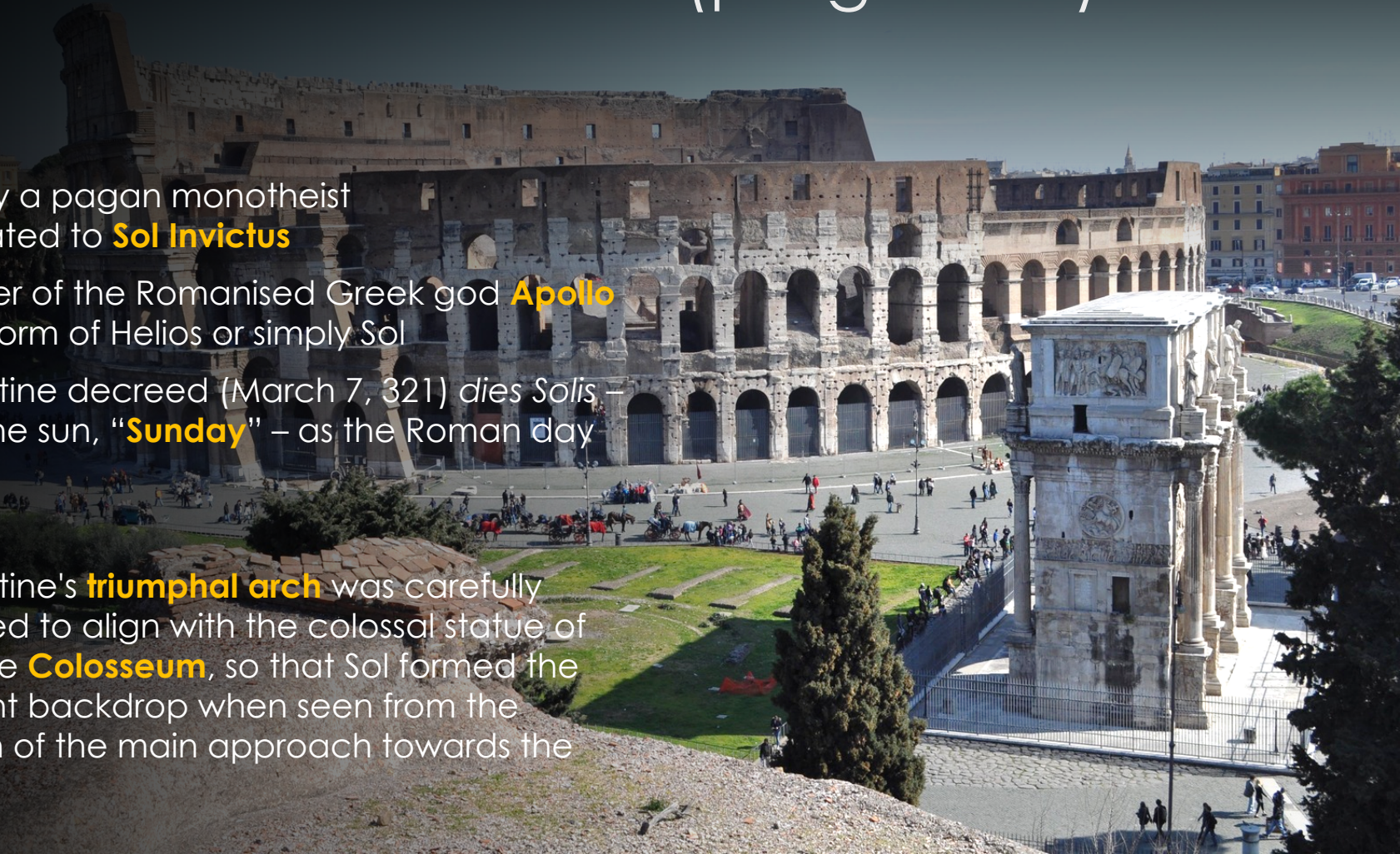
Constantine the Great (pragmatist)

Originally a pagan monotheist
– dedicated to **Sol Invictus**

A follower of the Romanised Greek god **Apollo**
– in the form of Helios or simply Sol

Constantine decreed (March 7, 321) *dies Solis* –
day of the sun, “**Sunday**” – as the Roman day
of rest

Constantine's **triumphal arch** was carefully
positioned to align with the colossal statue of
Sol by the **Colosseum**, so that Sol formed the
dominant backdrop when seen from the
direction of the main approach towards the
arch.



and the response of the “Christian” emperor Constantine was?



with Sol Invictus (Mithras) as his minister (comiti)

and the response of the “Christian”
emperor Constantine was?



to present himself grandly
accompanied by the sun god



and the response of the “Christian”
emperor Constantine was?

“The pagan Saturnalia [an eight-day December 17-24 festival] and Brumalia [The December 25 celebration] were **too deeply entrenched** in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence,”

- Christmas, New Schaff-Herzog
Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge

timeline of the date of Christmas



274 AD, pagan Roman emperor Aurelian proclaimed 25th December as “Natalis Solis Invicti,” the festival of the birth of the invincible sun



320 AD, Pope Julius I specified the 25th of December as the official date of the birth of Jesus



325 AD, Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman emperor, introduced Christmas as an immovable feast on 25th December (Council of Nicea)



336 AD, in an old list of Roman bishops, "25 Dec.: natus Christus in Betleem Judeae." i.e. December 25th, Christ born in Bethlehem, Judea. - the first **recorded celebration** of Christmas



354 AD, Bishop Liberius of Rome **ordered** the people to celebrate on December 25th



378 AD, spread to Constantinople (East)



400 AD, and to Alexandria

why would they
tolerate and **promote**
this festival & date?

it was a lot easier to
rename a popular
pagan holiday than
to **repent** of its
practice

and **many** were deceived...

Revelation 12:1-6 NKJV

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the **sun**, with the **moon** under her feet, and on her head a garland of **twelve stars**. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give **birth**...

...She bore a **male Child** who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was **caught up to God and His throne**.



the cost of compromise - **syncretism**

“Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era itself, a festival was celebrated among the heathen, at that precise time of the year, in honour of the **birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven.**

It may fairly be presumed that, in order to conciliate the heathen, and to **swell the number of the nominal adherents of Christianity**, the Roman Church, giving it only the name of Christ adopted the same festival.

This tendency on the part of **Christians to meet Paganism halfway** was very early developed; and we find Tertullian, even in his day, about the year 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect, and contrasting it with the strict fidelity of the Pagans to their own superstition”

- Two Babylons, Alexander Hislop, p. 93

and it caused serious **dissention**...

"The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner.

Christian preachers of the West and the Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival."

- Christmas, New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia
of Religious Knowledge



...and then it just didn't matter anymore

"The conflict is keen at first; the Church authorities fight tooth and nail against these relics of heathenism, these devilish rites; but mankind's instinctive paganism is insuppressible, the practices continue as ritual, though losing much of their meaning, and the Church, weary of denouncing, comes to wink at them, while the pagan joy in earthly life begins to colour her own festival."

- Christmas in Ritual and Tradition, Christian and Pagan, Clement A. Miles

- ▶ In the 17th century, **Christmas was banned** for a time in England and in early America
- ▶ In the 19th century, most Christian churches **gradually adopted** some form of Christmas celebrations
- ▶ Today, **most Christian churches celebrate** the birth of Jesus on December 25th and a few, on January 6th

so 25th December **isn't**
the birth of Christ **nor**
is it truly Christian **at all**

but it is remembered
religiously every year









Anglican



Lutheran

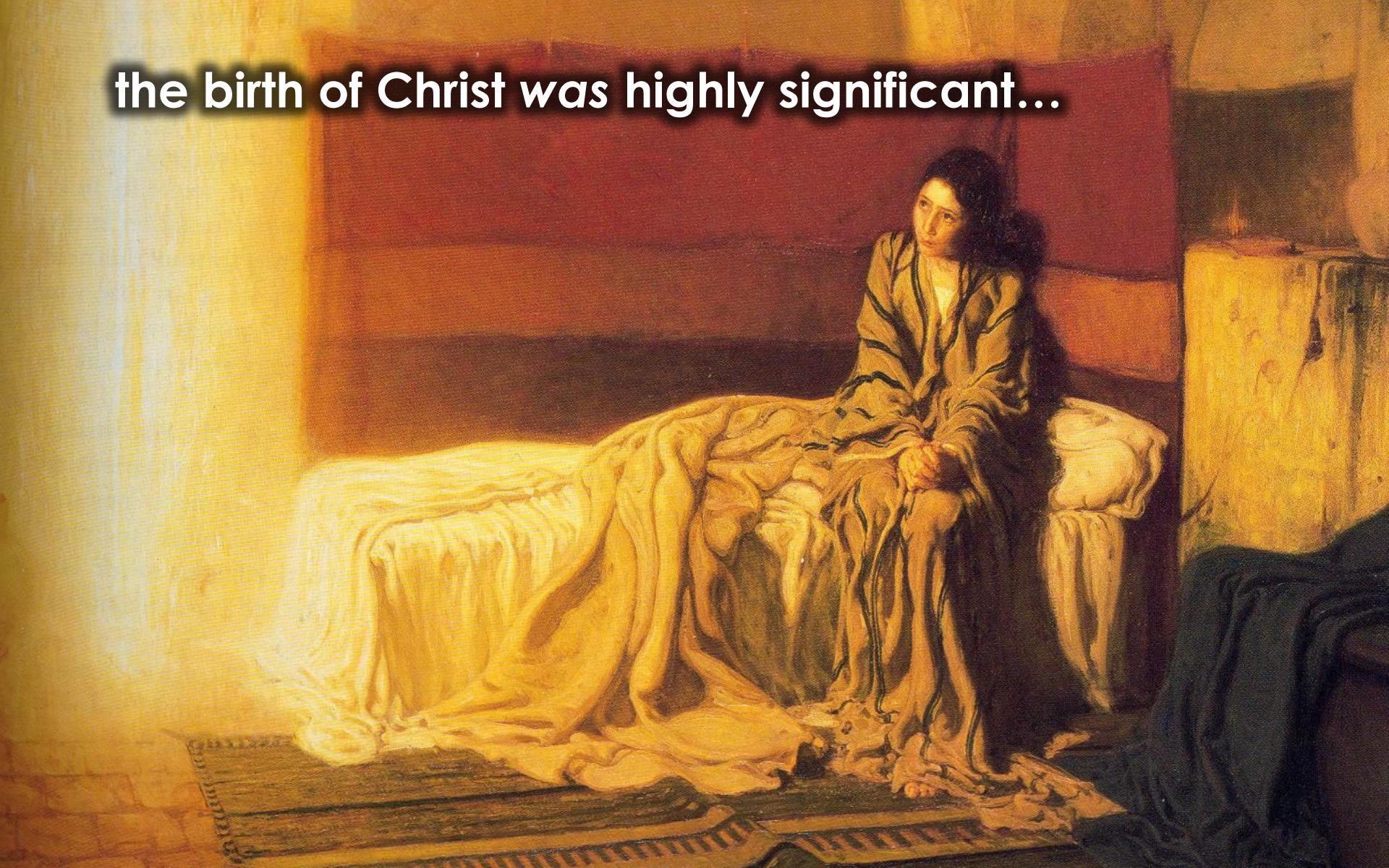


Pentecostal



THE BIRTH OF JESUS

the birth of Christ was highly significant...



Luke 1:26-38

....the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth **a Son**, and shall call His name **Jesus**. He will be great, and will be called **the Son of the Highest**; and the Lord God will give Him **the throne of His father David**. And He will **reign** over the house of Jacob forever, and of His **kingdom** there will be no end."



Luke 1:26-38

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

And the angel answered and said to her, "The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the **power of the Highest** will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called **the Son of God**.

Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. **For with God nothing will be impossible.**"

in the fullness of time... Christ was born



Luke 2:8-16

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

GOSPEL

Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you **good tidings** of great joy which will be to all people.

For there is born to you this day in the city of David **a Saviour**, who is **Christ the Lord**.

And this will be **the sign** to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, **lying in a manger**."



...as significant as it is
we are still **not asked**
to memorialise Christ's
birth

what we **are** asked to
remember is this...



The life, death and resurrection of Christ

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NKJV

...the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**"

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. **This do**, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of Me.**"

For as **often** as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim **the Lord's death till He comes.**



and did the first
Christians **obey** this?



Acts 20:7-8 NKJV

Now on the first day of the week, **when the disciples came together to break bread**, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.

how are
you going
respond?



do these words of Paul apply?

Galatians 4:8-11 NKJV

[Paul to Galatians] ...when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are **not gods**.

But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you **turn again** to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

You **observe days and months and seasons and years**.

I am afraid for you, lest I have laboured for you in vain.



what will **you** remember this year?
the death & resurrection of Christ
or the birthday of a sun god?



after all, there is only **one** Light of the World

John 8:12



