

Sol Invictus and the Birth of Christ

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It is the annual Christmas season, and once again, as seems to occur every single year, online Christians of different

doctrinal persuasions are engaged in debating the validity of celebrating December 25th as the supposed birth date of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If you visit some of the social networks -- Facebook in particular -- you'll quickly discover that some Christians are vehemently defending the practice of celebrating Christmas on said date, while other Christians are strongly opposing the tradition.

As I point out in a few other articles which are listed at the end of this same article, personally, I do not observe Christmas. My position is based on two primary points, first of which is the fact that I am convinced that Jesus was born nowhere near that date. And second, I am also convinced that December 25th is directly tied to the ancient Roman worship of the Sun, as I will now explain to you in considerable detail.

For those of my online friends who may possibly doubt the connection between the ancient, pagan, Roman worship of the Sun, and how it was eventually so-called "Christianized" in the 4th century by Roman emperor Constantine I, so that it supposedly now represents the birth date of the Son of God, I encourage you to carefully and prayerfully consider the following historical information. You can verify all of it for yourself if you like. You do not have to believe me if you don't want to. Nevertheless, regardless of your personal position, history is still history.

According to certain scholars, the Roman emperor Aurelian instituted the festival of "Dies Natalis Solis Invicti" -- meaning "birthday of the Invincible Sun" -- on the 25th of December in the year 274 AD. In case you are not aware of it, December 25th is the date of the Winter Solstice in the Roman calendar, or Julian calendar. In our modern calendar -- which is based on the Gregorian calendar -- the winter solstice is marked as being on December 21st.

Many people have obviously heard of the Winter Solstice, but some of them don't quite understand exactly what this phrase means. Without getting too scientific, basically, it is the day with the shortest period of daylight hours, which thus makes it the longest night of the year. It is also the day when the Sun is at its lowest daily maximum elevation in the sky. All of this is due to the fact that on this particular day, one of the Earth's poles is positioned at its maximum

tilt away from the Sun. The opposite is true of the Summer Solstice on June 21st when the longest day of the year will occur.

So for the ancient Romans, "Dies Natalis Solis Invicti" -- "birthday of the Invincible Sun" -- on the 25th of December represented both the death and the birth of the Sun; because while that day was the shortest and darkest day of the year, it also marked the day when the days would begin to slowly grow longer again, as the Sun grew higher in the sky, and further north from the equator.

So this is why similar to some emperors before him, Aurelian viewed Sol Invictus -- the "Invincible Sun" or "Unconquerable Sun" -- as the primary god of Rome. It was reborn every year on December 25th. In fact, it was also on December 25, 274 AD that Aurelian dedicated a new temple to Sol Invictus. This brought the total number of temples dedicated to this false Roman god to at least four according to online sources.

One rather interesting thing about this particular Roman event is that this celebratory day was immediately preceded by the seven-day Roman festival known as Saturnalia, which lasted from December 17th to December 23rd. This very joyous Roman holiday season -- which honored the false Roman god of agriculture, Saturn -- was characterized by happy parties, banquets, the exchanging of gifts, gambling, drunkenness and wild revelries. Slaves were also allowed to temporarily lord over their masters during this festival, and a sacrifice was also made in the Temple of Saturn.

So while Saturnalia was celebrated as a festival of light which preceded the Winter Solstice, the Winter Solstice was celebrated as the renewal of light and the rebirth of the Sun. Moving up almost fifty years, we discover that on March 7, 321 AD, Roman emperor Constantine I -- who likewise was a worshipper of Sol Invictus -- decreed "dies solis" -- the day of the Sun, or Sunday -- as the Roman day of rest. In fact, similar to previous emperors, Constantine I had the image of Sol Invictus stamped on the official coinage. Thus, he was definitely a worshipper of this false Roman god of the Sun. Constantine declared the following:

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"On the venerable day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country however persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits because it often happens that another day is not suitable for grain-sowing or vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost."

----- End Quote -----

There is other historical evidence which clearly indicates that emperor Constantine I did in fact worship the Sun god, Sol Invictus, and other false Roman gods and goddesses as well. I assure you that if you conduct research of your own, you will discover this to be true for yourself.

Now, before continuing our discussion, please consider some of the key points we have covered thus far. First of all is the seven-day festival of Saturnalia beginning in the third week of December, during which the Romans were quite merry, had very lavish banquets with lots of food and drink, and during which they exchanged gifts. This festive period was immediately followed on December 25th by Dies Natalis Solis Invicti when they celebrated the birth -- or rebirth -- of their Sun god, Sol Invictus, which correlated with the Sun beginning its northerly trek again.

Now, tell me, my friends, honestly speaking, doesn't all of this seem very familiar to you? Doesn't it sound very much like a certain annual holiday which is celebrated the world over today, particularly by Christians who celebrate the Birth of the Son of God on December 25th? But it is merely a coincidence, right? It isn't anything we should be concerned with, right? Please excuse my sarcasm, but these similarities should all be so obvious to any open-minded Christian who is honest with himself or herself.

So the next question we need to ask ourselves is exactly what happened next. How is it that an ancient, pagan Roman holiday which observed December 25th as the birth of the false god of the Sun -- Sol Invictus -- was then transformed into one of the holiest annual holidays during which many Christians the world over bring to remembrance the birth of the Son of God, Jesus Christ?

As we can learn from both the Biblical record as well as the historical record, beginning in the First Century and moving forward, despite serious persecution from Roman emperors such as crazy Nero and Domitian during the First Century, and much later Diocletian during the Fourth Century, the new Christian faith began making serious inroads into the Roman Empire. As a result, by the time of Constantine I, some of the Christian bishops had acquired considerable power and wealth.

As I point out in a few other Bill's Bible Basics articles which you will find listed at end of this same article, as the Roman Empire conquered other countries and cultures, and thus expanded its sphere of power and influence, it likewise absorbed the customs and beliefs of those cultures. A prime example of this is Israel itself. While the nation of Israel was subjugated by Rome, nevertheless, the Israelites were still allowed to practice their own religion, that of course being Judaism, or Pharisaism.

Rome was not really interested in what religion a conquered people practiced, just as long as they remained obedient to Rome and didn't cause trouble. Thus, the dominant religious order of Israel -- which was comprised of the Sadducees and the Pharisees -- maintained a delicate balance of power with the Roman governors who ruled over Israel. As I have pointed out before, it was when Jesus' appearance in Israel began to threaten that balance, that the Jewish religious hierarchy became concerned. It eventually resulted in this scene:

"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country

near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples."

John 11:47-54, KJV

To continue, unlike most of the other emperors, Constantine was particularly lenient towards Christians, even though he had not yet been publicly recognized as a Christian himself. According to a particular story which has been circulating for centuries now -- personally, I have serious doubts about it -- during an important military battle against Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge north of Rome in 312 AD, Constantine supposedly had a vision in which God placed a symbol of the cross in the sky.

It is likewise claimed that Constantine had a dream in which Jesus instructed him to have his soldiers inscribe the first two Greek letters for the word "Christ" -- that being Chi Rho -- on their shields. Some of my readers would recognize this as the letter P being superimposed over the letter X. Supposedly, the Lord told Constantine that it would be by that symbol that he would conquer his enemies. Against all odds, Constantine soundly defeated Maxentius and his army, and then he victoriously marched into Rome.

As I mention in other articles, the following year in 313 AD, Constantine I met with emperor Licinius in Milan. Among other things which were discussed at that meeting, the two emperors agreed to the so-called Edict of Milan. This edict officially granting full tolerance of Christianity and all other religions which were practiced in the empire. Not only did the document declare Christianity a "religio licita" -- meaning an approved or permitted religion -- but it likewise granted Christians full restoration of all their properties which had been confiscated during Diocletian's persecution against them.

Please note that while Christianity was declared a permitted religion by the Edict of Milan, as I point out in the series called "Pontifex Maximus: Pagan High Priest to Roman Catholic Pope", it wasn't really until the reign of emperor Theodosius I in 380 AD that it became the state religion of the Roman Empire. In fact, this change in the status of the Christian faith -- which was declared in the Edict of Thessalonica -- came with the threat of persecution against anyone who did not embrace the Christian/Catholic faith.

By 326 AD, following a series of other battles, betrayals and various other events, Constantine I finally became the sole emperor of the Roman Empire. In 324 AD, Constantine declared the Greek city of Byzantium as his eastern capital. The city was dedicated and renamed as Constantinople in 330 AD. Slowly but surely, Constantine incorporated more and more Christian symbolism into his new city, replacing the old gods of his predecessors.

You should know that there is some debate regarding exactly when Constantine declared himself a Christian. Some scholars embrace the view that his Greek mother -- Helena -- adopted Christianity as an adult. According to the Greek historian, Eusebius, she was converted by Constantine. However, other historians debate whether Constantine adopted his mother's Christian faith in his youth, or whether he did so gradually over the course of his life. Some say that he was over forty years old when he finally did. I have likewise read accounts which claim that he didn't fully embrace Christianity until he was baptized on his deathbed in 337 AD. It has been said that Constantine waited to be baptized until he was on his deathbed because he believed that baptism would resolve him of any sins he had committed in the course of carrying out his policies while he was emperor.

Personally, I think some of the things I have stated here are just Roman Catholic propaganda and bunk, including the so-called Milvian Bridge supernatural incidents Constantine supposedly experienced. My reasoning is quite simple. As I point out in other articles, nowhere in the New Testament Scriptures do Jesus and the Apostles ever advocate violence and war. They always promoted peace and loving your enemies.

It is for that very same reason that I likewise reject the so-called "Christian Crusades" as being ordained by God. In my view, those terrible wars were simply the corrupt Roman Catholic Church expanding its sphere of power and influence through war and violence, and trying to grab back Jerusalem from the Muslims, which they temporarily did.

The simple truth of the matter is that the Roman Catholic Church has for a very long time now had a keen interest in controlling Jerusalem, and it still does. Furthermore, a secret war has been waged between Catholics and Jews for

literally centuries. It is waged on different fronts, but you will not see it unless you know what to look for. The religion which the RCC practices and preaches is a worldly Christianity based on power and wealth, and nothing more.

Now, concerning Constantine's supposed conversion to the Christian faith, honestly speaking, I have my doubts about that as well. I do not know if he truly had a sincere and genuine life-changing experience through faith in Christ as his Lord and Savior, or if being the shrewd leader that he was, he simply realized early on that aligning himself with the Christians was politically advantageous to him. Even if he really did convert, as I said a moment ago, the faith of Rome was not then, and is not now, the same as Bible-based Christianity. It is filled with pagan practices and ideas, and other secular thinking and worldliness.

I will admit that my perspective concerning Constantine's supposed conversion is colored to some degree by what I see occurring today in modern American politics. As I have said many times over the years, American Christians can be some of the most naive, gullible people in the world. Sadly, it is a fact that some politicians are fully aware of this. As a result, they realize that if they use just the right buzz words, and make just the right promises -- even if they do not ever really intend to keep them -- that they can easily secure the Christian vote in any election. We have seen it happen time and time again. Has it just happened again in 2024? Time will tell.

So is it possible that Constantine I was motivated in the same way? I honestly don't know. However, let me also point out that while Constantine exalted Christianity during his reign, nevertheless, there remains some evidence which does suggest that he did not totally forsake all of the other pagan gods which were popular in his empire. Anyway, this is an issue which has been debated for centuries now, and which will undoubtedly continue to be debated.

Whatever the case may be, Constantine I is known to have financially supported the progenitors of the early Roman Catholic Church. At the behest of his mother, Helena, he built many basilicas, and he extended privileges to the clergy, including granting them exemptions from certain taxes. He also promoted Christians to high office, and as

I mentioned earlier, he returned property which had been confiscated during the previous persecution. Some of his most famous construction projects include the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as the Old St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

In 323 AD, Constantine issued a decree which banned the Christians from participating in state sacrifices. It is also interesting to note that after the pagan gods had disappeared from his coinage, Christian symbols began appearing in their place. Furthermore, the Chi Rho was displayed on his labarum. That is to say, on his official banner.

Also of note is the fact that with his reign, Constantine I also established a precedent for the emperor to have great influence and authority in the early church councils, most notably with regard to the dispute concerning Arianism. As you may know, this doctrine -- which some Christians view as a serious heresy -- maintains that Jesus was a created being who was created by God the Father. As a result, He was not coeternal. In fact, in 325 AD, Constantine presided over the First Council of Nicaea, which in addition to dealing with Arianism, also instituted the Nicene Creed which defined a statement of belief for the early Roman Catholic Church. It was also during that Council that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was firmly established in the Roman Catholic Church.

As I mentioned earlier, based on everything I have shared with you, and other online resources I have studied, I am convinced that the Christianity which was practiced by Rome, beginning with Constantine, was not the same faith that was taught and practiced by Jesus and the Apostles. It was, and still remains, a totally different beast. It is a far cry from the First Century Church. It is a false church. I also believe that some of the bishops of that era compromised the beliefs and principles of our faith in order to acquire more power and wealth. In short, it is my opinion that, contrary to Christ's and the Apostles' teachings, the church married the world, the end result of which is the very powerful, worldly -- and I would dare say doctrinally-impure -- Roman Catholic Church which we have today.

I explained to you earlier how those compromised Christians took pagan Roman beliefs and practices and "Christianized"

them. This brings us back to our discussion concerning Sol Invictus, the birth of the Sun, December 25th, Christmas, and the Birth of Jesus Christ. As you may know, it's widely believed by more and more Christians -- myself included -- that those compromised bishops who were the progenitors of the early Roman Catholic Church, chose December 25th as the birthday of Jesus Christ -- or "Dies Natalis Christi" -- as a way to appropriate -- or make their own -- the pagan Roman festival of "Dies Natalis Sol Invictus" -- the birthday of Sol Invictus -- which was also held on December 25th right after the seven-day festival of Saturnalia.

In fact, around 336 AD when Constantine was still in power, the Calendar of Filocalus recorded for the first time that "Dies Natalis Christi" and "Dies Natalis Sol Invictus" were celebrated on the very same day, meaning December 25th. It isn't difficult to see how with the passage of time, the pagan Roman celebration of the birth of the Sun became the celebration of the Birth of the Son. This practice simply continued what Constantine I had begun when he removed the pagan gods from his coinage and replaced them with the Chi Rho symbol. Now do you see it? It was a very slow, subtle compromise.

If you still require additional proof of what I am saying, consider the fact that the early Roman Catholic Church referred to Jesus Christ as the "true Sun" -- that is to say, "Sol verus" -- or as the "Sun of Righteousness" -- that is to say, "Sol Justitiae" -- as had been prophesied by the Prophet Malachi in the following verse:

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."
Malachi 4:2, KJV

In fact, as you may know, if we dig even deeper into the Holy Scriptures, we discover similar symbolism in the following group of Bible verses:

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."
Psalm 84:11, KJV

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

James 1:17, KJV

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Revelation 22:5, KJV

"Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:"

Psalms 104:2

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

1 John 1:5, KJV

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

2 Corinthians 4:6, KJV

To continue, the late 4th century treatise known as "De solstitiis et aequinoctiis" associates Jesus' birth with the "birthday of the sun" and Sol Invictus with the following words:

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"Our Lord, too, is born in the month of December . . . the eighth before the calends of January [25 December] . . . But they [the pagans] call it the "birthday of the invincible one" (Invictus). But who then is as invincible as our Lord who defeated the death he suffered? Or if they say that this is the birthday of the sun, well He Himself is the Sun of Justice."

----- End Quote -----

Likewise, in a late 4th century Christmas sermon, Augustine of Hippo is also recorded as having stated the following:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Let us . . . keep this day with due solemnity; not, like those who are without faith, on account of the Sun, but because of Him who made the Sun . . . He, incarnate, stands above that Sun which is worshipped as a god."

----- End Quote -----

As final historical proof that the progenitors of the early Roman Catholic Church took the pagan Roman festival of "Dies Natalis Solis Invicti" -- or "birthday of the Sun" -- which occurred on December 25th, and transformed it without any Scriptural support whatsoever into the birth date of Jesus Christ, consider the following annotation which is found in a manuscript which was authored by 12th century Syrian bishop Jacob Bar-Salibi:

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"It was a custom of the Pagans to celebrate on the same 25 December the birthday of the Sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and revelries, the Christians also took part. Accordingly, when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnised on that day."

----- End Quote -----

With all of the previous historical evidence, I believe that I have presented a pretty solid case for proving exactly how December 25th became established as the birth date of Jesus Christ, even though there is absolutely no Scriptural proof to validate this erroneous claim. Considering how many other false doctrines have infiltrated the Roman Catholic Church over the centuries, is it really that difficult to believe and to accept that the "Jesus was born on December 25th" doctrine is just another one of the many lies of the Roman Catholic Church?

Now, some Christians may possibly argue, "But Bill, what about all of those verses you shared where God is compared to the Sun? Don't they justify celebrating Jesus' birthday on December 25th? Don't they justify taking a pagan Roman festival which worshipped the Sun, and converting it into a

Christian holy day in remembrance of the Birth of the Son?" In my view, no, they most certainly don't. Do you know why? Because despite everything, the fact remains that Jesus was NOT born on December 25th. Furthermore, when we take into consideration how extremely commercialized the holiday has become, and throw in Santa Claus on top of it, who draws attention away from Jesus Christ, it makes it all the worse.

In short, for any Bible-believing Christian to observe the 25th of December as the birth date of Jesus Christ is to propagate and to promote a lie, plain and simple. It is a compromise of our faith. It is the same spirit of compromise which trapped the early progenitors of the Roman Catholic Church, beginning with emperor Constantine I himself. That is my position.

Well, my friends, I have presented you with the evidence. Now it is up to you to decide what you want to believe, as well as what you intend to do about it. Will you continue to follow the world and help to continue propagating a lie that claims that Jesus was born on December 25th? Or will you have some real Christian conviction, buck peer pressure and political correctness, and rebel against the false traditions of men?

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. It is my hope that you have found it informative, enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you'd take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were either mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server. To read these articles, simply click or tap on any link you see below.

Birth of Jesus and the Star of Bethlehem
Cardinal Ratzinger's Rebellion
Celebrating National Holidays
Christmas: Its Pagan Origin

Have You Read the New Scriptures Yet?
Lies and Deceptions of the Roman Catholic Church
Mary Worship, Christianity and Roman Catholicism
Pontifex Maximus: Pagan High Priest to Roman Catholic Pope
Rise of the False Church
Roman Catholicism, Water Baptism and the Trinity
The Mystery of Jesus' Date of Birth
To Pray or Not to Pray, That is the Question
Who is Babylon the Great?

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