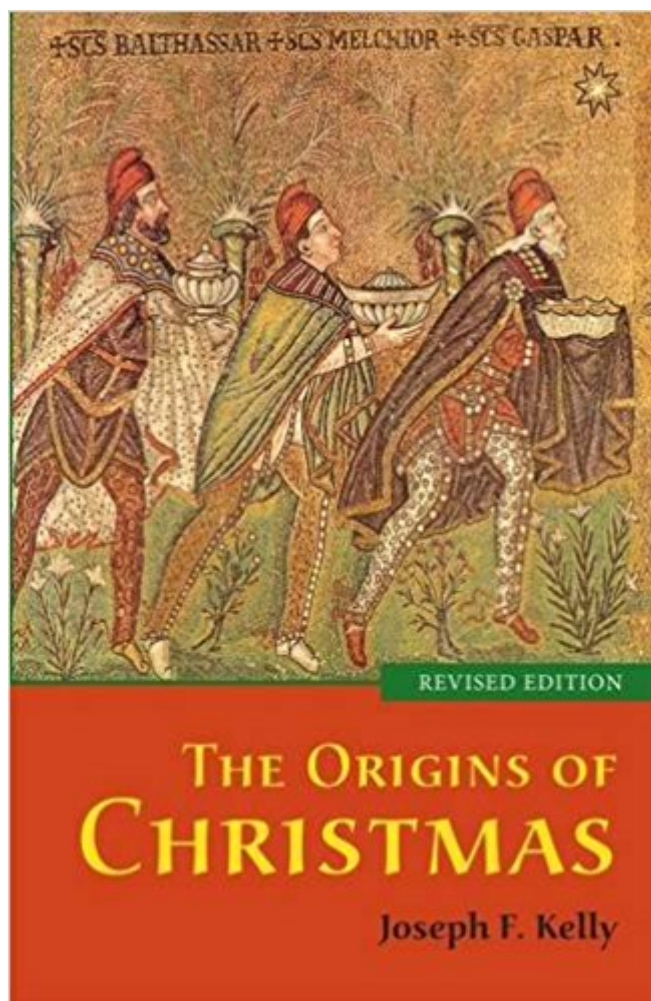


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# The Origins Of Christmas



## Synopsis

When was Christmas first celebrated? How did December 25 become the date for the feast? How did the Bible's magi from the East become three kings named Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar who rode camels from three different continents to worship the newborn Christ? How did the Feast of the Nativity generate an entire liturgical season from Advent to Candlemas? Why did medieval and Renaissance artists portray Joseph as an old man? When did the first Christmas music appear? And who was the real Saint Nicholas? These and many other questions are answered in this revised and expanded edition of *The Origins of Christmas*. The story of the origins of Christmas is not well known, but it is a fascinating tale. It begins when the first Christians had little interest in Christ's Nativity, and it finishes when Christmas had become an integral part of Christian life and Western culture. *The Origins of Christmas* covers a variety of topics in a concise and accessible style, and is suitable for group discussions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“This brief well-researched book is recommended not only for academic readers but also appeals to the general public.” *Theological Studies* “The diverse origins of Christmas will come as a fascinating surprise to most who know only the Sunday school version of the Christmas from their childhoods. . . . Very highly recommended and informative reading.” *Midwest Book Review* “Dr. Kelly has a tremendous breadth of knowledge about the Christmas story, and in this revised and expanded edition of *The Origins of Christmas* he shares fascinating details about the Nativity, from the prophecies prior to Jesus' birth to the traditions that formed over the many

centuries that followed. Scholars and laypeople alike can join with Kelly as he examines a variety of extrabiblical sources, including art and ancient sermons, to paint a more complete picture of the events associated with the world's most popular holiday.

• Angie Mosteller Founder, Celebrating Holidays Author of Christmas: Celebrating the Christian History of Classic Symbols, Songs and Stories "This volume . . . serves well to dispel myths, explain legends, and name key figures for any reader interested in the subject."

• Themelios "What a wonderful little book this is! "full of historical and scriptural information! It is readable and accessible to all." But best of all "what a splendid antidote to the commercialism of the Christmas season to be reminded of the true meaning of this happy, holy day."

• Catholic Library World "One of the many pleasures this book has to offer is the chance to recognize familiar faces-whether those of Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar or those of the ox and the ass-and to learn more about where they come from and why they are now so much a part of our understanding of Christmas." It shows the power of a good story, a story that Kelly calls "a delight to research and tell." That delight, so evident throughout his book, makes it a pleasure to read.

• Catholic Books Review Catholic Studies "With its colorful binding, interesting illustrations, wide coverage of topics and modest cost, the book is a valuable source of information and makes a fine Advent-Christmas gift."

• Prairie Messenger "This new book is a polished diamond: sound scholarship rendered in clear prose."

• St. Anthony Messenger

Joseph F. Kelly, PhD, chair of the department of theology and religious studies at John Carroll University, is active in adult religious education in the Greater Cleveland area. *The World of the Early Christians* (1997), *The Problem of Evil in the Western Tradition* (2002), and *History and Heresy* (2012) are among his nine previous books published by Liturgical Press.

Great in depth review of the first 500 years of the church and the traditions around the beginning of Christmas. This book is more academic than say *Christmas: A Candid History*, but if you enjoy the more detailed history and theological discussions, you will greatly enjoy this. Great read for those serious about their research.

A informative and fun book with only two criticisms: 1. The book rambles. It is a bit too wordy. 2. On page 41 the author states that Luke and Matthew agreed that Jesus was born during Herod the Great's time; however; this is problematic. According to Luke, Jesus was born during the rule of Quirinius, which began sometime between 6 or 7 a.d. There is, at least, a 10 year discrepancy that

the author did not address. For more information see: [...] or [...]

Short and sweet this little book takes us on a fascinating tour of theology, Christology and the not very trip from the small churches of the second and third century to a rousing conclusion takes into the very present time. A perfect read for anyone who ponders with wonder the syncretic nature of this special holiday. Bravo!

While scholarly in nature, this book is not so dry that it can't appeal to the curious layman. In "The Origins of Christmas", the author gives us the historical origins of the date of the celebration of Christmas, the origins of many of the traditions surrounding Christmas (such as the names and nature of the 'wise men'), and some of the modern traditions (such as the Christmas tree) as well. Well written and well researched. An asset to the library not only of the biblical or Church scholar, but the curious layman as well.

This is a fine popular introduction to the development of Christmas in the late ancient Christian era. It's relatively short so not exceptionally detailed, so it best served as a first look into the early history of Christmas.

Teaches you about the symbolism and origin of Christmas. Goes more in-depth than the traditional story and is a good read.

Great gathering of historical data and process not easily accessed from original sources. Prose style is pedestrian but does not get in the way. Excellent organization across the timeline. Good Book.

This book really digs into the history of how Christmas as we know it now came to be. It's a short book, but not a fast read- a lot of history to absorb and consider. Very interesting for the secular and religious alike!

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