Why Did They Choose December 25th to Celebrate?
Luke 2:1-14

PROPOSITION: Although Jesus was probably not born on December 25th, the church has regularly taken efforts to make the wonder of the incarnation the reason for our Christmas celebration.

I. Current claims

A. Accommodation to Saturnalia (& other pagan practices)

B. Iranian mystery god Mithra

C. Problems that began to bother me
   1. Inexact date
   2. Excesses absent early on
   3. Inconsistency with other celebrations
   4. Advent preparation

D. Reasons given for Dec 25th (including Hanukkah – 25th of Kislev)

II. Earliest references

A. Clement – Nov 17, 3 BC (and other dates and references in 100's)

B. Epiphany on Jan. 6 – 200's (Luke 3:23)

C. Other pre-fourth century references

D. Earliest recorded date – 336 AD (“25 Dec.: natus Christus in Betleem Judaea”)

E. Widespread official date – 354 AD

III. John the Baptist’s birth date

A. Division of Abijah
B. Eighth course
C. Conceived in mid-June, born in March
D. Coordination with Elijah & Passover

IV. Jesus’ birth date

A. Six months after John born
B. Roman census
C. Shepherds in their fields
D. Michaelmass (Tishrei 15)

V. What does that make December 25th then?

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