The 25th of December is celebrated as the birth date of Jesus Christ. The Bible does not mention Christmas, and early Christians did not observe the birthday of Christ. Christmas as we know it became widely popular only in the 19th Century.

Christmas starts on December 25 and ends 12 days later on January 6 with the Feast of Epiphany also called "The Adoration of the Magi" or "The Manifestation of God."

The concept of "Peace and Joy" over the Christmas season originates from the pagan believe in the magical powers of mistletoe. Enemies meeting under a mistletoe had to call truce until the following day.

In Finland and Sweden an old tradition prevails, where the twelve days of Christmas are declared to be time of civil peace by law. It used to be that a person committing crimes during this time would be liable to more stiff sentence than normal.

During the Middle Ages, many churches were built in honor of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children. Wearing his red and white bishop's robes, he would ride on a donkey to deliver gifts to children.

The first Christmas card, which went on sale in 1843, did not feature an image of Santa.

In 1860, illustrator Thomas Nast introduced Santa Claus in the fashion we now know him today, a happy, burly, white-bearded fella in a bright red suit.

**The meaning of the word "Christmas"**

The word "**Christmas**" means "**Mass of Christ**," later shortened to "**Christ-Mass**." The even shorter form "**Xmas**" – first used in Europe in the 1500s – is derived from the Greek alphabet, in which X is the first letter of Christ's name: Xristos, therefore "X-Mass."

Today we know that Christ was not born on the 25th of December. The date was chosen to coincide with the pagan Roman celebrations honoring Saturnus (the harvest god) and Mithras (the ancient god of light), a form of sun worship. These