

for Saturnalia, their feasts honoring their god of harvest. Likewise, in September, during the Jewish Feast of Trumpets (modern-day Rosh Hashanah), they would borrow some of the custom to protect themselves, carrying on with their own customs behind closed doors. This added to the speculation that early Christians celebrated the birth of Christ in September. It is noted that Jerusalem swelled from about 100,000 people to over 1 million during the Feast of the Trumpets, which meant that there would have been little room at the inns of Jerusalem and the surrounding towns.



Early Christians appear not to have celebrated the birth of Christ. In fact, Christmas became widely popular only in the 19th Century.

### **The dating of the founding of Rome**

In the 6th Century, the Roman monk-mathematician-astronomer named Dionysis Exeguus (Dionysis the Little) reformed the calendar to pivot around the birth of Christ. He dated the Nativity 753 years from the founding of Rome, calculated to the date King Herod died. But Dionysis miscalculated, because Herod died only 749 years after the founding of Rome, thus 4BC.

Herod, who ordered all the babies in Bethlehem younger than 2 years killed, was, of course, alive when the Magi visited the baby Jesus. So we know that Jesus was born in or before 4BC, as astronomers point out when referring to the Star of Bethlehem. Matthew 2: 1-2: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi came from the east to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."