

Sermon – Christmas, Is It Christian?

Given the season, I thought I'd begin the sermon by reading a quote to you. I wonder if any of you can guess what is being described. Let's try.

“Everywhere may be seen...well-laden tables...The impulse to spend seizes everyone. He [that] through the whole year has taken pleasure in saving...becomes suddenly extravagant...A stream of presents pours itself out on all sides.”

Does anyone think they know what this writer was describing? Does anyone care to try a guess? We must be talking about Christmas, right?

No – actually, these are the words of the fourth-century writer **Libanius** describing the end-of-year festivities of the **pagan** Roman Empire.

Historians, both ancient and modern, tell us the Christmas celebration came from **pagan** origins. The historian William Walsh (1854-1919) summarizes the holiday's origins and practices in his book “*The Story of Santa Klaus*”: “We remember that the Christmas festival . . . is a gradual evolution from times that long antedated the Christian period . . . It was overlaid upon heathen festivals, and many of its observances are only adaptations of pagan to Christian ceremonial.” (1970, p. 58).

How could pagan practices become part of a major church celebration? What were these "heathen festivals" that lent themselves to Christmas customs over the centuries? Christmas is replete with traditions, but where did they all come from and what do they have to do with the birth of Christ?

In other words, how did Christmas come to be observed the way we see it today? How did the customs and practices associated with Christmas make their way into traditional Christianity's, and perhaps the world's, most popular holiday?

When I was young, my family kept what I believe to be a typical American Christmas. The children would help decorate a tree with ornaments, tinsel, and garlands. Mom and dad would be busy wrapping presents and putting them under the tree. They would eat cookies that the children had put out earlier for Santa Claus. Children are told that Santa can see and hear them at all times and in every place (something only God can do). They are told that Santa would soon come down the chimney and leave presents under their Christmas tree.

Perhaps some of you have had similar experiences. I'm not familiar with all of the Christmas customs in Kenya, but I'm sure there are similar customs. Things like going to church, holding night vigils (Keshu) and singing hymns and carols. Everywhere you go, people are wishing each other “Heri ya Krismasi”. I'm sure you also have plenty of holiday decorating, but I know that instead of decorating pine or fir trees, you decorate cypress trees. Also I hear that Santa Claus rides a camel or a bicycle there, not a sleigh pulled through the sky by eight flying reindeer.

Don't some of those customs sound a bit crazy? Yet we went along with every strange and bizarre custom, never questioning what our parents taught us. We accepted it--took it all for granted. And similar scenarios are played out in countless homes around the world with activities planned and anticipated throughout the year. Most often they are carried out without a thought given to the one whose life it claims to celebrate.

Although the children are always interested in the activity and the presents, Christians who really

study their Bible will have nagging questions: How do Christmas traditions really celebrate the birthday of Jesus? Where is the observance of Christ's birth taught in the Bible? How did Santa Claus get involved with the birth of Christ? Where did we get Christmas trees, Yule logs, wreaths, and mistletoe? Jesus was born on December 25, wasn't He? Christmas is one of the most important Christian holidays, isn't it?

We live in a world filled with customs that most people grow up practicing without question. The majority participates in the observance of Christmas, believing it to be one of the principal teachings of the New Testament. Since we look to Christ as the author of our salvation, maybe we should take a deeper look into the celebration of his birth. This sermon will answer those questions. We can know the origins of these customs, and just how these traditions became associated with Christmas.

Stop and think a moment! Very few people ever reflect on why they believe what they do--why they follow the customs they do, or from where those customs came. We were born into a world filled with customs. We grew up accepting them without question.

But today, we are going to question all of the trappings of the Christmas holiday and get answers to questions such as:

- How--when did Christmas originate?
- Does Christmas really celebrate the birthday of Christ? Was Jesus born on December 25th?
- Did the original apostles, who knew Jesus personally and were taught by Him, celebrate His birthday on December 25th? Did they celebrate it at all?
- If Christmas is the chief of the Christian holidays, why do so many non-Christians observe it?
- What is the origin of the many traditions associated with this holiday?
- Why do people exchange presents with family members, friends, relatives, at Christmas time? Was it because the wise men presented gifts to the Christ-child?
- What is God's view on Christmas? Does it please Him and Jesus?
- Finally, and most basically, Is Christmas Christian?

It's an amazing fact that our Creator's view of this popular holiday is totally ignored or not even considered by most people. Yet His perspective should be our main consideration. Let's examine the history of Christmas and compare it with God's Word, rather than our own ideas, traditions and experiences, to discover His opinion regarding this almost-universal holiday.

What the Encyclopedias are saying

The word "Christmas" is derived from "Mass of Christ" or "Christ-Mass". The Christmas festival came to the Protestants and the secular world from the Roman Catholic church. However, the Roman Catholic church did NOT get Christmas from the original Apostles. It's not even in the Bible!!!

Now just in case you may think I just have something personally against Christmas, or as the psychologists saying, I just had a bad childhood so I feel bad about Christmas, or worse, I belong to a religious cult!!.... let us see what the Catholic and secular Encyclopedias themselves are saying about Christmas!!

"Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church...the first evidence of the feast is from Egypt." "Pagan customs centering around the January calends gravitated to Christmas." "...In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great

banquet on his [Jesus] birthday. It is only sinners who make great rejoicings over the day in which they were born into this world" **Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911 Edition, published by the Roman Catholic Church**

"...Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church...." **Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946 edition**

"Christmas... It was, according to many authorities, not celebrated in the first centuries of the Christian church, as the Christian usage in general was to celebrate the death of remarkable persons [eg Communion - death of Christ] rather than their birth..." "...A feast was established in memory of this event [the birth of Jesus] in the fourth century. In the fifth century the Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever ON THE DAY OF THE OLD ROMAN FEAST OF THE BIRTH OF SOL [SUN], as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed." **Encyclopedia Americana, 1944 Edition**

Christmas was not celebrated by the Church UNTIL the FOURTH CENTURY. Christians did NOT celebrate Christmas for the first 300 years - longer than the entire history of the United States of America!!

How Christmas got into the Church

So how did Christmas get into the Christian Church?? The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge gives a clear explanation in the article on "Christmas".

“How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (December 25th) following the Saturnalia (December 17th-24th), and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun'...cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence...The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia ACCUSED THEIR WESTERN BRETHREN OF IDOLATRY AND SUN WORSHIP FOR ADOPTING AS CHRISTIAN THIS PAGAN FESTIVAL”

The Roman Empire had been pagan, and prior to the 4th century, Christians were few in number and persecuted by the government and pagans. Then the Emperor Constantine professed Christianity, placing it on an equal footing with paganism. Christianity suddenly became popular.

However, most of the "converts" had been brought up in pagan customs, the chief of which is December 25th. They enjoyed this festival of joy and merrymaking, and they did not want to give it up!!

The pagan Manichaeism identified the SON of God with the physical SUN, giving the new "converts" an excuse to call December 25th (re-birth of the SUN) the birthday of the SON of God.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, some Latins, as early as 354AD, may have transferred the birthday of Christ from January 6th to December 25th, which was then a Mithraic feast or birthday of the unconquered SUN. The Syrians and Armenians who clung to January 6th accused the Romans of

sun worship and idolatry, claiming the December 25th festival was invented by the disciples of Cerinthus.

One can clearly see that the date of December 25th for celebrating Christ's Mass, supposedly in honor of his birth, is well known for what it really was -- the feast of Saturnalia, an extremely vile festival.

December 25th was the date of Saturnalia, a celebration in honor of the Roman god, Saturn, which day coincided with the winter solstice. When the calendar was changed from the Julian to the Gregorian, the actual data of the Winter Solstice change to December 23, but the earlier date for the celebration was far too entrenched to be changed. To ancient pagan civilizations this was the birthday of the gods -- the time of year when the days began to lengthen and man was blessed with a regeneration of nature.

December 25th was indicated on the old Roman Calendar as Dies Natalis Invicti Solis -- the Day of the Birth of the Unconquered Sun. The Roman church adopted that date as the birthday of Christ, **blending** their culture's pagan traditions with [so-called] Christianity as a way of '**converting**' souls to Christ.

The true origins

So where did it all begin?? If we got Christmas from the Roman Catholics, and they got it from paganism, where did the pagans get it? Where, when, and what was its real origin?

According to Alexander Hislop in his book, *The two Babylons*, it originated shortly after the Flood when a mighty warrior named Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-9) became the first to organize men into fortified cities and, together with his wife, Semiramis, began to rule over them. It was he who laid the foundation of the first world-ruling empire -- Babylon. He organized the building of the tower of Babel. Nimrod and Semiramis developed what we now know as the Babylon Mystery religion -- the basis for most of the ancient god and goddess mythologies.

In the mythology of ancient Egypt, they were known as King Osiris and Queen Isis, with their son Horus, known also by his Babylonian name Tammuz.

According to the story, after the untimely death of King Osiris, his wife, Isis, propagated the doctrine of the survival of Osiris as a spirit being. She said he had been torn to bits by a wild boar -- and to this day in many countries, a boar's head is the favored meal at Christmas. She claimed a full-grown evergreen tree sprang overnight from a dead tree stump, which symbolized the springing forth unto new life of the dead Osiris. On each anniversary of his birth, she claimed, Osiris would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts upon it. December 25th was the birthday of King Osiris reborn as the son Horus. This is the real origin of the Christmas tree.

Actually, historians and Bible scholars have determined the real story behind these myths. In the Bible, according to the book of Genesis, Noah had three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Ham had a son by the name of Cush, and Cush's son was called Nimrod, and was known as the "mighty hunter". It was Nimrod who attempted to build a tower that would reach to Heaven. God confused their language, so they couldn't understand each other, and they were scattered over the face of the Earth. Nimrod established a religious system -- the Babylon Mystery Religion, with the help of his mother, Semiramis, whom he later married. **[origin of Oedipus and other mother/wife myths].**

Nimrod's great-uncle, the righteous Shem, became so enraged over Nimrod's activities, and with the help of a group of Egyptians, killed him, chopped his body up into little pieces, and sent the pieces to different cities as a warning to those who dabbled in this new idolatrous religion.

Nimrod's mother/wife Semiramis seized upon this opportunity and proclaimed Nimrod a god. She gathered all of Nimrod's pieces, except for his penis, which she couldn't find. She established phallus worship, claiming that an Evergreen tree sprouted from a tree stump, which she said indicated the regeneration of Nimrod's creative force (i.e., his penis) and the entry of new life into the deceased Nimrod. Every year on the anniversary of Nimrod's birth, said to be on December 25th, she would leave gifts at this Evergreen tree, which was the origin of the Christmas tree. I'll give you one guess what those spherical ornaments hanging from those trees REALLY symbolize!

Through her scheming and designing, Isis became the "Queen of Heaven," and Osiris under various names, became the reborn "divine son of heaven." Through the generations, in this idolatrous worship, Osiris also became, among the later Phoenicians, Baal the Sun-god. In this false system, introduced at Babylon, after the Flood, by Nimrod (see Genesis 10 and 11), the "Mother and Child" (Isis and Osiris reborn) became chief objects of worship. This worship of "Mother and Child" spread over the world. The names varied in different countries and languages. In Asia the worship passed under the names of Cybele and Deoious. In Rome, Fortuna and Jupiter-puer. Even in Greece, China, Japan and Tibet is to be found the counterpart of the Madonna, long before the birth of Christ!

Thus, during the fourth and fifth centuries, when the pagans of the Roman world were "accepting" the new popular "Christianity" by the hundreds of thousands, carrying their old pagan customs and beliefs along with them, merely cloaking them with Christian-sounding names, the Madonna and "Mother and Child" idea also became popularized, especially at Christmas time. Every Christmas season you'll hear sung and chanted dozens of times the hymn "Silent Night, Holy Night," with its familiar "Mother and Child" theme. We, who have been born in such a world, reared and steeped in these things all our lives, have been taught to revere these things as holy and sacred. We never questioned to see where they came from--whether they came from the Bible, or from pagan idolatry!

We are shocked to learn the truth--some, unfortunately, take offense at the plain truth! But God commands His faithful ministers in **Isaiah 58:1**, "*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression!*" Shocking as these facts are, they are the plain facts of history and the Bible!

The origin of Christmas goes back to ancient times. It is bound up in the apostasy which has gripped a deceived world these many centuries! In Egypt, it was always believed that the husband of Isis (Egyptian name for "Queen of Heaven") was reborn as the son Horus on December 25th. Through the influence of Egypt and, later, Babylon over civilization, the nations celebrated this famous birthday over most of the known world for centuries before the birth of Christ.

December 25th is not the birthday of Jesus the true Christ! The apostles and early true Church never celebrated Christ's birthday at any time. There is no command or instruction to celebrate it in the Bible-- rather, the celebrating of birthdays is a pagan, not a Christian custom.

Thus, the ancient idolatrous "Mysteries," have been handed down through the pagan religions under new Christian-sounding names.

Jesus was not born on December 25th

History convincingly shows that Dec. 25 was popularized as the date for Christmas, not because Christ was born on that day, but because it was already popular in pagan religious celebrations as the birthday of the sun. But is it possible that Dec. 25 could be the day of Christ's birth?

A careful analysis of Scripture, however, clearly indicates that Dec. 25 is an unlikely date for Christ's birth. Here are two primary reasons:

First, we know that shepherds were in the fields watching their flocks at the time of Jesus' birth (**Luke 2:7-8**). Shepherds were not in the fields during December. According to **Celebrations: The Complete Book of American Holidays**, Luke's account "suggests that Jesus may have been born in

summer or early fall. Since December is cold and rainy in Judea, it is likely the shepherds would have sought shelter for their flocks at night" (p. 309).

Similarly, **The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary** says this passage argues "against the birth [of Christ] occurring on Dec. 25 since the weather would not have permitted" shepherds watching over their flocks in the fields at night.

Second, Jesus' parents came to Bethlehem to register in a Roman census (**Luke 2:1-4**). Such censuses were not taken in winter, when temperatures often dropped below freezing and roads were in poor condition. Taking a census under such conditions would have been self-defeating.

Given the difficulties and the desire to bring pagans into Christianity, "the important fact then which I have asked you to get clearly into your head is that the fixing of the date as December 25th was a compromise with paganism" (**William Walsh, The Story of Santa Klaus, 1970, p. 62**).

Christmas Day - December 25th - is near to the middle of winter in the Northern Hemisphere - including the Palestine region or Judaea.

Let's look a bit closer at the story of the shepherds in the fields

Luke 2:8, "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."

The shepherds did NOT keep their sheep in the fields during December! The sheep were brought in under cover before mid-October to protect them from the cold rainy season that would follow. You see, the winters in Judaea are characterized by cold, wet, rainy conditions!!

Song of Songs 2:11 For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over *and* gone;

Ezra 10:9, "*Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It [was] the ninth month, on the twentieth [day] of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of [this] matter, AND FOR THE GREAT RAIN.*"

The "ninth month" corresponds roughly to early December today. You see this time of year was characterized by winter rains in Judaea. The sheep were not in the fields at that time!!

Here's what the **Adam Clarke Commentary** (Vol 5, page 370, New York ed) has to say about the date of Christ's birth....

"It was an ancient custom among Jews of those days to send out their sheep to the fields and deserts about the Passover (early spring), and bring them home at commencement of the first rain,..."

"During the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to part of our October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole summer. And, as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could He have even been born later than September, as the flocks were still in the fields by night. On this very ground, the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact..."

John the Baptist's birth date

If Jesus Christ weren't born on Dec. 25, does the Bible indicate when He was born? The biblical accounts point to the fall of the year as the most likely time of Jesus' birth, based on the conception and birth of John the Baptist. Since Elizabeth (John's mother) was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:24-36), we can determine the approximate time of year Jesus was born if we know when John was born. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple during the **course of Abijah** (Luke 1:5). Historical calculations indicate this course of service corresponded to June 13-19 in that year (The Companion Bible, 1974, Appendix 179, p. 200).

It was during this time of temple service that Zacharias learned that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a child (Luke 1:8-13). After he completed his service and traveled home, Elizabeth conceived (verses 23-24). Assuming John's conception took place near the end of June, adding nine months brings us to the end of March as the most likely time for John's birth. Adding another six months (the difference in ages between John and Jesus) brings us to the end of September/beginning of October as the likely time of Jesus' birth.

Interestingly, this is the time of the year when the Feast of Tabernacles occurs. And in John 1:14, we find an interesting Greek word used to describe Jesus' physical life.

John 1:14 ^(KJV) And the Word was made flesh, and **dwelt** among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The word translated **dwelt** is from the Greek word *skenoo* (pronounced "skee-new"), which means "to pitch a tent or to camp, to fix one's tabernacle, have one's tabernacle, abide (or live) in a tabernacle (or tent)". In other words, Jesus **tabernacled** among us! Doesn't it make sense that He would be born on one of the seven annual Holy Days of God? The Amplified Version makes this very clear.

John 1:14 ^(AMP) And the Word (Christ) became flesh (human, incarnate) and tabernacled (fixed His tent of flesh, lived awhile) among us; and we [actually] saw His glory (His honor, His majesty), such glory as an only begotten son receives from his father, full of grace (favor, loving-kindness) and truth.

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Yuletide and the Yule Log

"The Yule Log tradition comes to us from Scandinavia, where the pagan sex and fertility god Jul, or Jule (pronounced 'yule'), was honored in a twelve-day celebration in December. A large, single log (generally considered to have been a phallic idol) was kept with a fire against it for twelve days, a different sacrifice to Jul being offered in the fire on each of the twelve days. The Yule log was originally an entire tree, carefully chosen, and brought into the house with great ceremony. The butt end would be placed into the hearth while the rest of the tree stuck out into the room. The tree would be slowly fed into the fire and the entire process was carefully timed to last the entire Yule season."

This is where the Twelve Days of Christmas originated, which are now counted as the twelve days between "Christmas" and Epiphany (January 12th).

"Yuletide, meaning the turning of the sun or the winter solstice, has traditionally been a time of extreme importance in Scandinavia - a time when fortunes for the coming year were determined and when the dead were thought to walk the earth. For a long time, it was considered dangerous to sleep alone on Christmas Eve. The extended family, master and servant alike, would sleep together on a freshly spread bed of straw. "

In France the Yule log is still held in present use in the form of a log shaped cake called "buche de Noel." This cake has found its way into other countries, among them the USA.

Using logs to decorate or shape cakes after, giving yuletide greetings, and any recognition of the Twelve Days of Christmas or Twelfth night; is giving credit to this vile phallic worship of Scandinavia's past. Yuletide is also observed by witches today as one of their main high days, so if you are "celebrating" you are doing so with witches.

The Norse also sacrificed a boar to their god Freyr during yuletide. It is thought that this is probably where the English tradition of serving boar's head at "Christmas" came from.

Gift Giving

The excuse for giving gifts to each other at Christmas is generally that the wisemen gave gifts to Jesus. But notice again from **The Origins of Christmas Traditions:**

"Among the Romans it was customary to exchange food, trinkets, candles, or statues of gods during the mid-winter Kalends (the first day of the month in the ancient Roman calendar). This custom was transferred to December 25th by the Roman Church in keeping with the Saturnalian festival.

Giving of gifts accompanied the pagan rituals of Rome and other Babylonian affected cultures. Woden and Odin were thought to give special gifts in the north, while in Rome branches from the grove of the goddess of the New Year, Strenua, were given as gifts. Later the Romans started giving more expensive gifts on New Year's. (Sending of Christmas and New Year's cards is an extension of this ancient custom that was brought about by the invention of the printing press.)

Let us see what the Bibliotheca Sacra (vol 12 pp 153-155) says about the exchanging of gifts at Christmas...

"The interchange of presents between friends is alike characteristic of Christmas and the Saturnalia, and MUST HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY CHRISTIANS FROM THE "The interchange of presents between friends is alike characteristic of Christmas and the PAGANS, as the admonition of Tertullian plainly shows."

Well, how about the giving of gifts to baby Jesus by the Wise Men???

Consider what the Scriptures says....

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; **gold**, and **frankincense**, and **myrrh**. MATTHEW 2:1-2,11

Notice here.... the wise men gave Jesus gifts because He was a KING of the Jews - it was not because it was His birthday. It was customary to give gifts to someone who is a King, just as it is so in many cultures today. In any case, the wise men didn't give any gifts to Jesus until long after His birthday. We will look closer at the reason for those three gifts a little later in the sermon.

"Verse 11 (They presented unto him gifts) The people of the east never approached the presence of kings and great personages, without a present in their hands. The custom is often noticed in the Old Testament, and still prevails in the east, and in some of the newly discovered South Sea Islands." **Adam Clarke Commentary, vol 5, page 46**

The exchanging of gifts among friends and relatives is not found in the Scriptures, it is derived from paganism.

Santa Claus / Saint Nicholas

While many are aware that children should not be allowed to believe in Santa Claus and some are aware that he was a ploy of the Roman Catholic Church, not many realize that the origins of the legend come so thoroughly from paganism! He is an antichrist image through and through.

The name 'Santa Claus' is believed to be a corruption of the Dutch 'Sant Nikolaas' (Sant-Ni-Klaus). St. Nicholas (as he was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church) was made bishop of Myra because of his reputed piety. He was believed to have venerated the Christ-child and practiced the child-like virtues of meekness and humility. Legend has it that he gave aid to the poor, always providing his gifts anonymously. In memory of his generosity mothers would hide gifts for their children and tell them they were left by St. Nicholas.

Because of his alleged piety, and legends attributing 'miracles' to him which centered on children and the bestowing of fertility upon childless couples, St. Nicholas is revered by the Roman Catholic Church as the patron saint of children.

The legends of St. Nicholas bear many similarities to those of the ancient Egyptian god Bes, a rotund, gnome-like personage who was the patron of little children." Bes was the god of war, slaughter, music and dance and childbirth, but was also supposed to be the protector of children.

Among other things, his symbols included bells and drums. Bes was usually "Depicted as a bearded savage-looking yet comical dwarf, shown full-face in images (highly unusual by Egyptian artistic conventions). Revered as a deity of household pleasures such as music, good food, and relaxation. Also a protector and entertainer of children. However, many texts point to the idea that Bes was a terrible avenging deity, who was as swift to punish the wicked as he was to amuse and delight the righteous." One source claimed that Bes was Babylonian in origin.

To complete the description of Santa Claus, we find that "Many pagan societies have worshipped a hearth god, clad in red, who came down the chimney to bless those who pleased him and to curse those who didn't. Food and drink offerings were left for him on hearth or mantel, an effort to please and appease him. There are such red-clad hearth gods worshipped in India and China today." Tiawan's hearth god is said to return to heaven to report on the affairs of men on the 24th day of the 12th lunar month. This is reminiscent the scripture regarding Israel's apostasy in these things:

Jeremiah 7:18 "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger."

This verse covers a multitude of evils from eggnog to Christmas cookies, but it also fits the sacrifices left out for the Old Nick, otherwise known as St. Nicholas or Santa Claus. Leaving these offering under the "Christmas tree" has even more significance when we read in Ezekiel 6:13 that they offered sweet saviors to their idols under every green tree.

Ezekiel 6:13 "Then shall ye know that I [am] the LORD, when their slain [men] shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savor to all their idols."

So, here again we have the fertility connection so prevalent in the "Christmas" tradition and again idolatry right down to the details.

Added to this is another horrible fact: "It would surprise many to learn that even the name 'Christ Child' has been given to this pagan deity under the name 'Kriss Kringle' (a corruption of the German 'Christ Kindl'). This has to be one of the most subtle of Satan's blasphemies, yet most Christians are unaware of it." (1) So, not only is the Egyptian god, Bes, being promoted as a saint; he is even given the name of Christ! Again, the blasphemy is unavoidable!

Holly

What could be wrong with holly? It's so innocent and so many churches decorate with it, even Bible believing ones that don't have much use for ChristMass.

Holly, as the sacred plant of Saturn, was used by the Romans at the festival of Saturnalia. They made holly wreaths which they gave to each other as gifts and used to decorate images of Saturn. It is said that weak Christians would decorate their homes with holly to avoid persecution.

Many superstitions surround the holly plant. Some believe that it brings peace and under a tree of it is an ideal place to settle disagreements. According to some it is said to frighten away witches and goblins. Some use it to "protect" the home from lightening. This charm especially "works" if the

piece of holly was formerly used to decorate a church according to some Germans. It is also used on bed posts to bring sweet dreams.

Some British farmers put holly on their bee hives. This apparently stems from a legend that bees hummed in honor of the Christ child.

Some English also speak of the "he holly and the she holly." This comes from a belief that these determine who will rule in a household the following year. The "she holly" is smooth leaved and the "he holly" is prickly.

So much for decking "the halls with boughs of holly!"

Ivy

Ivy is used more in England for a ChristMass green than in the USA. For those who use ivy for ChristMass greenery -

To pagans ivy was a symbol of eternal life. So-called Christians tried to make it a symbol of eternal life and new promise. Considered feeble and clinging - feminine even; it is unlike the sturdy, masculine holly.

"It was the ancient symbol of Bacchus, the god of wine and revelry."(1) Bacchus, or Dionysus, worship was an extremely wicked and vile idolatry.

Mistletoe

Mistletoe, the famous kissing bough, is a parasite that lives off of the host tree which it attaches itself to. It has been considered sacred for centuries to various pagans.

Druids used it in their sacrifices to devils. The Celts believed it held supernatural healing power. (Its' very name in Celtic means "all-heal.") It was also thought to render poison harmless, increase fruitfulness of both animal and man, protect against witchcraft, and protect from ghosts. It supposedly brought good luck to those who had it.

The mistletoe were used at the festival of the winter solstice by ancient pagans because it was considered sacred to the sun. The mistletoe supposedly had miraculous healing powers, probably due to the fact that not only the plant remained green throughout winter but it actually bore fruit during this time, a type for fertility spirits!! This led to the tradition of "kissing under the mistletoe" - occurring early in the night of revelry and drunken debauchery, celebrating the death of the "old sun" and birth of the "new sun" at the solstice.

Norsemen had a symbolic lie about it which ties in directly to the sun-god legend (Mother/Child cult) that ChristMass really centers around. They said that it was sacred to Frigga, goddess of love, who was the mother of Balder the sun god. "Balder had a dream of death which greatly alarmed his mother, for should he die, all life on earth would end. In an attempt to keep this from happening, Frigga went at once to air, fire, water, earth, and every animal and plant seeking a promise that no harm would come to her son. Balder now could not be hurt by anything on earth or under the earth. But Balder had one enemy, Loki, god of evil and he knew of one plant that Frigga had overlooked in her quest to keep her son safe. It grew neither on the earth nor under the earth, but on apple and oak trees. It was lowly mistletoe. So, Loki made an arrow tip of the mistletoe, gave to the blind god of winter, Hoder, who shot it, striking Balder dead. The sky paled and all things in earth and heaven

wept for the sun god. For three days each element tried to bring Balder back to life. He was finally restored by Frigga, the goddess and his mother. It is said the tears she shed for her son turned into the pearly white berries on the mistletoe plant and in her joy, Frigga kissed everyone who passed beneath the tree on which it grew." (1)

Thus, the end of the story is, of course, that all who stand under the mistletoe should not be harmed, but receive a kiss in token of love - sun god "love," that is!

CHRISTMAS VS. THE BIBLE

How well do the customs and traditions of Christmas match the biblical account of Christ's birth? An objective look shows that many traditions supposedly rooted in the Bible don't match the biblical account.

Did **three** wise men travel to see Jesus? The Bible doesn't say. There could have been more. We are told only that they gave Jesus three kinds of gifts: "gold, frankincense, and myrrh". Because of this, the number three has been attached to those Wise Men. The actual number of wise men is not known.

Matthew 2:1-2, 11 "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. . . And when they were come into the house, they saw the **young child** [Greek paidion] with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Here is the significance and symbolism to the three gifts:

- **Gold** Acknowledged Jesus as **King**
- **Frankincense** Acknowledged Jesus as **High Priest**
- **Myrrh** (used to embalm) Acknowledged Jesus as our **Savior**

According to **Luke 2**, the shepherds saw the baby Jesus on the same night He was born. Did the wise men arrive at the same time, as is portrayed in traditional Nativity scenes? Not really. By the time the wise men arrived, apparently quite a while after Christ's birth, the family was residing in a house (see Matthew 2:11 above). Verse 16 implies that this visit of the Magi may have been as much as two years after His birth.

Matthew 2:16 ^(KJV) Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, **from two years old** and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Another fallacy that Nativity scenes often depict is that of the baby Jesus and Mary surrounded by animals. This is due to a misunderstanding of **Luke 2:7**.

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and **laid him in a manger**; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The word translated **inn** is the Greek *kataluma*.

2646 kataluma {kat-al'-oo-mah} AV - **guest chamber** 2, inn 1

While this can mean an inn, it is more likely to mean the guest chamber or “spare room” that was common on Jewish houses at that time. This passage is the only place where *kataluma* is translated “inn”, but Bethlehem was too small of a town to have an inn or what we would call a hotel today.

Remember that Joseph was going back to his hometown for the census. Being from the household of David, that meant Bethlehem. He had relatives there and would certainly have taken his pregnant wife to stay at one of these relatives. While it’s great to visit relatives, more people means that there was no room in the guest chamber (inn) for Mary to lay Jesus.

Being an agrarian society, most people had animals that they would bring into the lower part of the house at night. Having animals meant having feeding troughs or mangers. With the guest chamber (inn) full, a logical place to lie the newborn Jesus would have been in a manger filled with nice, soft hay, after wrapping Him in swaddling clothes.

One of the other places that *kataluma* is used is found in Luke 22 where Jesus is giving instructions to His disciples on preparing for the Passover before His death. This clearly shows that the *kataluma* He told them to prepare was a “large upper room”, not an “inn”.

Luke 22:11-12, “And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the **guestchamber**, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a **large upper room** furnished: there make ready.”

CONCLUSION:

Should Christians Celebrate Christmas?

Did the writers of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) consider Jesus' birth to be one of the most significant events for Christians to acknowledge or celebrate? Mark and John do not even mention the event. Although Matthew and Luke mention it, neither gives the date. None of the biblical writers says anything about commemorating Christ's birth. Did Jesus Christ tell us to celebrate His birth? No. However, He left explicit instructions regarding how His followers are to commemorate His death (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

During the days of the apostles in the first century, the early Christians had no knowledge of Christmas as we know it. But, as a part of the Roman Empire, they may have noted the Roman observance of the Saturnalia while they kept their customary "feasts of the Lord" (listed in Leviticus 23).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica tells us: "The sanctity of special times was an idea absent from the minds of the first Christians . . . [who] continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed" (11th edition, Vol. VIII, p. 828, "Easter").

Over the following centuries, new, humanly devised observances such as Christmas and Easter were gradually introduced into traditional Christianity. History shows that these new days were forcibly promoted while the feast days of the apostolic times were systematically rejected. "Christmas, the [purported] festival of the birth of Jesus Christ, was established in connection with a fading of the expectation of Christ's imminent return" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, Macropaedia, Vol. IV, p. 499, "Christianity").

Tradition

Sometimes tradition is acceptable and perhaps even pleasing in the sight of God. Sometimes it is not acceptable and is even hated by Him. The evil of traditions that transgress the commandment of God was a key teaching of Jesus the Messiah:

Matt 15:1 ^(NKJV) *"¹Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ²"Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."*

People ask me, "Why don't you celebrate Christmas (transgress the traditions of our elders)?" Nowhere in the pages of scripture do we find a command to celebrate Christmas. Nowhere in the pages of scripture do we find an example of any disciple keeping Christmas. So, my answer to this question would be the same as Christ's (**Verse 3**)

³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" ⁴ "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' ⁵ "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" ⁶ "And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

This was an example of how the scribes and Pharisees forsook the commandment of God in favor of their tradition. As we have seen, Christmas is also transgressing the commandment of God in favor of tradition. What does Jesus think about this?

⁷ "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:" ⁸ "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me." ⁹ "And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Christmas is honoring with the lips but it is one of many vain doctrines and commandments of men. Again, there is not a single scripture in the bible that tells us that we are to celebrate the birth nor the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, especially in a pagan way!

Today, Christmas is a very popular holiday. However, as is often the case, what is popular is not always right and what is right is not always popular. Christmas means 'mass for Christ'. The name of the holiday is much newer than the holiday itself. The customs associated with Christmas, in one form or another, have been celebrated for literally thousands of years. 'Christmas' is just a new name for an old holiday.

There is no doubt that the customs that are associated with Christmas, as well as the idea of a deity being born on December 25th are of pagan origin. We have examined ample evidence of this. The

real issue is whether or not we should walk in these customs. What's so bad about it? Is it just for the children? What should we be teaching our children? Truth or lies?

The truth is that the Messiah was not born on December 25th. December 25th is the birthday of nearly every pagan god ever invented! In fact, the pagan customs associated with Christmas are clearly condemned in the scriptures. Paganism/Idolatry is something that is against God. If we know that the roots of Christmas are of pagan origin, shouldn't the roots of our worship be in the scriptures, rather than paganism? Consider these scriptures:

Jeremiah 10:1-4 ^(KJV) Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, **Learn not the way of the heathen**, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people *are* vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

First of all, God is telling us in this verse "Do not learn the way of the Heathen" Don't even learn it, let alone practice it and incorporate it into the worship of God! Secondly, it says that the Heathen [Nations, Gentiles] were dismayed at the signs of heaven. History tells us that when the sun began to go further away from the earth and the days grew shorter in the winter, the sun worshipping Heathen were "dismayed", and feared that the sun would not return. So they held certain festivals just after the time of the Winter Solstice when it did begin to return. This return of the sun is why December 25th is the birthday of so many solar deities.

One of the customs the pagans has was to decorate a tree that they had cut down and fasten it so that would not topple. God tells us not to learn the way of the heathen. And here He even goes so far as describe a custom that is a way of the heathen. Yet, we see this same custom exist even today which is called the Christmas tree. Have you ever wondered why in the world someone would do something as strange as cut down a tree and put it in their house and then decorate it with all different types of ornaments? Not only is it odd, it is wrong. This custom, along with other pagan customs like it are clearly condemned in this passage. We don't need a prophet to come and tell us today that this custom is wrong. Jeremiah said so a long time ago!

This custom, along with other pagan customs like it are clearly condemned in this passage. Other customs include Mistletoe, the Yule log and Santa Claus. If you seek, you will find that these things are rooted in idolatry also.

Lies, lies, and more lies

The very foundation of the Christmas holiday is a lie. The Messiah was not born December 25th. He did not ask us to celebrate his birthday. He did not say to set up a tree in our house and decorate it and our houses with anything. Santa Claus does not exist. He doesn't have reindeer that fly and he isn't going to come on December 25th and leave any gifts. Everything is a lie. Is God the originator of this holiday? Or is it the father of lies? Jesus condemned the leaders of that generation for teaching lies:

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

It's high time that we forsake these lies and abide in the truth! Let's forsake this foolish practice of yoking the Messiah (who said "I am the TRUTH") together with lies, for He has nothing to do with lies.

Mixed worship condemned in scripture

Now let's take this a step further. Not only is it sinful in the eyes of God to practice these traditions, it is also a sin to take these traditions of pagans and apply them to the worship of God.

Deuteronomy 12:29 (NKJV) “When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, ...”

(This is God warning the children of Israel about what NOT to do when going into the promised land)

Verse 30 “take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.'”

Notice, they didn't say "Let us serve their gods" but "**How** did these nations serve their gods?"

Verses 31-32 “You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

It's very CLEAR - “You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way” It is abundantly clear. Do not worship God in that way, the way of the heathen! Do not add to His commandments and do not take away from His commandments. Both Christmas and Easter take pagan festivals and traditions and apply them to the worship of the true God. This is clearly condemned here. Would it be right to take a Satanic holiday that Satanists have invented and then incorporate that holiday into the worship of God? Surely not. Yet all paganism originates with Satan. Satan is behind all pagan worship. And whatever god the idolaters worship, they are actually worshipping Satan.

1 Corinthians 10:20-21 (NKJV) “Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”

Now consider this next verse:

Verse 21 “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.”

Which table will you choose? I hope it is God's table.