

CHRISTMAS—ITS ORIGIN

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If we were to ask several people the meaning of Christmas, 80% of them would say, ‘The birthday of Christ, of course.’ Most of the others would say, ‘The day we celebrate the birthday of Christ, since we really don’t know just when He was born.’ Several years ago that would have been my answer too.

About 23 years ago, just before Christmas, my family and I had returned from church and were listening to a well-known evangelist on the car radio. He was saying, ‘Let’s put Christ back into Christmas.’ The thought appealed to me and I thought, ‘Yes, let’s put Christ back into Christmas.’ I was surprised to hear a small Voice within me say, ‘How can you put Christ back into something He was never in?’

This not only surprised me, but alarmed me as well. What was the meaning of this? I had been raised in a Christian home and all my life I had been taught that December 25th was the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ. I had accepted that without question. Now though, I was being challenged about it. So, I set about trying to prove what I believed.

First of all, I re-read the accounts in the Scriptures concerning the birth of our Lord. I didn’t immediately find anything there that told *when* He was born. I went next to the library to research ‘Christmas.’ This is what I found:

‘Christmas (i.e. the Mass of Christ) was not among the earliest festivals of the Church, and before the 5th century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come on the calendar, whether on January 6th, March 25th or December 25th.’ (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

“In Britain, December 25th was a festival long before the conversion to Christianity, for Bede relates that ‘the ancient peoples of the Anglo began the year on December 25th when we now celebrate the birth of the Lord; and the very night which is now so holy to us, they called the mother’s night, by the reason we suspect of the ceremonies which in the night long vigil they performed.’” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

‘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, rather than their birth.*’ (*Encyclopedia Americana*)

It is unknown just when it originated, but surely December 25th was not generally observed as the date prior to Chrysostom’s time (4th century) in the Eastern Church, although much earlier in the the Western Church. There was no uniformity in the period of observing the Nativity among the early churches. Some held the festival in the month of April or May, others in January. January 6th was the usual date for the feast of the Nativity in the Eastern Church and still continues to be the date in the Armenian Church.

‘It is impossible to establish any date as the exact time in the year of the birth of Christ. It is often objected that December 25th cannot be the true date, for it is then the rainy season in Israel, when shepherds would hardly have been watching their flocks by night in the fields’. (*The New International Encyclopedia*)

This much of my research had pointed out two things. One, the encyclopedias didn't seem to have the information as to when Christ was born. And two, that December 25th didn't seem to be that time. What they did point out however, was that it was not celebrated in the first centuries of the Christian Church. And that when it began to be celebrated the date varied among the churches. This concerned me.

A question arose. If God had wanted us to celebrate the birth of His Son wouldn't He have made the date known to us in His Word? My studies so far had told me what it was not, now to find out the original reason for the celebration of December 25th.

WHOSE BIRTHDAY?

Further research brought more light upon the subject:

'In the 5th century, the Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed. Among the German and Celtic tribes, the winter solstice was considered an important turning point of the year. They held their chief festival of Yule to commemorate *the return of the burning wheel*. The holly, mistletoe, Yule log and the wassail bowl are relics and symbolic of pre-Christian times'. (*Encyclopedia Americana*)

'The early church was eager to replace pagan festivals by Christian ones. As Christianity spread, the feast of winter solstice, the time when the day begins to increase and light to triumph over darkness was easily turned into the feast of Christ, the light of life. Many of the great beliefs and usages of the old German and also Romans, relating to this matter, passed over from heathen practice into Christianity and have survived to the present day.'
(*The New International Encyclopedia*)

Now I had found that since no one seemed to know just when Christ was born, Christianity had adopted someone else's birthday. Who was this Sol anyway upon which so much honor had been bestowed? And who or what was this burning wheel? Here was a 'chief festival' held in his honor and it had come down from pre-Christian times and had survived to this present day. I had to know who this was that held so much honor.

'The early Church Fathers probably chose December 25th because the feast of the sun, or winter solstice, was a familiar Roman feast celebrating the victory of light over darkness. This idea was easily turned from a pagan to a Christian one since Christians consider Christ as the light of life.' (*The World Book*)

"The real birthday of Christ is unknown. In Rome it was kept on December 25th from about 330 AD onward, when to the '*birth of the unconquered sun*' or winter solstice was opposed that of the 'sun of justice' (Christ); it can scarcely date from the 3rd century, for *the earliest Christians did not keep birthdays*.'" (*Collier's Encyclopedia*)

Oh, there was the answer. The birth of the 'unconquered sun.' That didn't sound too good. Not only was December 25th not the birthday of our Lord, but it was the time that the ancient peoples celebrated the birth of the sun!

This opened up another study for me, that of sun-worship. Further study on the subject of sun-worship took me all the way back to ancient Babylon.

It seems that shortly after the Flood, man realized that the sun traveled southward for a certain length of time during which time the days became shorter and shorter. They noted that there was a day when a noticeable change was observed, and the 'return of the burning wheel' was celebrated. Light began once again to triumph over darkness; the sun was 'born again.' And so the 'Nativity of the Sun' became the chief winter festival. There were several other aspects of worship involved which also included the other celestial bodies, but the sun was considered 'chief.' It was the sun that was thought to rule the heavens and the earth. It was the thing which they thought gave them life.

THE TREE, MISTLETOE AND YULE

Then I wondered how the Christmas tree and other Christmas favorites were associated with this winter festival. *The World Book*, under Origin of Christmas Tree related this:

'Several scholars believe the Christmas tree began in early Rome. It appears in Germany in literature in 1604. Tree worship was common in Scandinavian countries. The Swedes and Norwegians still place a small fir tree or a branch on the ridge-pole of a newly built house for good luck. When the pagans of northern Europe became Christians, they made their sacred evergreen trees a part of the Christian festivals and decorated the trees with gilded nuts, candles (a carry-over from sun worship), and apples to stand for the stars, sun and moon.'

Opening *The World Book* under Yule, I read this:

'The early pagans of Scandinavian countries held Yule festivals near the end of each year. After Christianity was introduced into Europe, these festivals became Christian celebrations. The custom of burning a Yule log started in pagan times. The early Norsemen honored Thor, their god of war by burning a Yule log with great ceremony during the Yule season.'

This really didn't tell me the origin of these things. However, it did say that they were a 'carry-over from sun worship.' My studies again took me back to ancient Babylon. It was nearly 4,000 years ago that these things originated. During the winter months when vegetation died and things looked bleak, it was noted that there were some things which stayed green. Among them were the evergreen trees (the fir, palm, holly, etc.) and the mistletoe.

The mistletoe was generally found in trees that were not themselves evergreen, so it was quite noticeable. The ancient peoples thought that those things that stayed green all winter somehow had the substance of the gods in them (of which the chief was the sun). So, they began to worship these ever-green things in relation to their great Sun god. They even took new born babes and tied them to the branches of evergreen trees. If they survived the night, they were dedicated to the sun god.

As these practices came down from Babylon to Egypt, Greece and Rome, they took on different names. But the practices remained the same. December 25th was claimed to be the birthday of the chief gods from Babylon to Rome, regardless of their different names.

The names of the gods seemed to vary in accordance with the name of the person ruling the people. Each succeeding ruler of the people wanted to be deified. The original Babylonian festival started when Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod, claimed that overnight, an evergreen tree sprang up from a dead tree stump beside his grave. The dead stump supposedly symbolized her dead husband Nimrod. The new evergreen

tree was Nimrod come to life again in the person of the god Tammuz.

So, the practice of burning the dead stump began and the following morning (it was said) the evergreen tree had appeared; the god had been 'born again' from the dead tree stump in the form of the evergreen tree. The stump or Yule log, represented the dead stock of Nimrod and the Christmas tree was Nimrod re-vived, deified as the sun god or the 'son of the sun god.'

THE UNDECORATED TREE

By now my head was spinning. All of this was so new to me. I had truly believed that December 25 was the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ. To find that it wasn't really bothered me. To find that it was a carry-over from sun worship bothered me even more.

It is not an easy thing to discard from one's mind, that which had been put into it from childhood. At this point I began to justify and said, 'Oh, it doesn't really matter whether it is the birthday of Jesus or not. We are honoring Him and that's all that really counts.'

Then just before the next Christmas I was sitting by the fire one evening reading the Bible. My wife was putting up lights around the windows and was in the process of decorating the Christmas tree. She wanted me to come and help her and got a bit upset when I didn't do so right away. She fell from the ladder and that really upset her. I checked to see if she was hurt and helped her up and then asked her to come and sit beside me. I was reading in Jeremiah 10:2-5:

'Thus says 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 peoples are vain. For one cuts 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 the hammer that it moves not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not. They must be lifted to go anywhere, because they cannot walk on their own. Be not afraid of them. For they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.'

The words just seemed to leap out at me. My wife said, 'Oh, but we are not worshiping the tree like they did then.' But the words 'Learn not the way of the heathen' began to burn themselves in my mind. And I couldn't help but see the connection between how God felt about the tree cut out of the forest and decked with gold and silver, and our Christmas tree. I began to feel uneasy about what we were doing 'for Jesus.'

The Christmas lights were not strung up that year and the tree remained undecorated. Then one day, while reading in Deuteronomy 12:28-32 I saw:

"Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. When the Lord your God has cut off before you the nations whom you are about to enter to dispossess them, when you have dispossessed them and live in their land, take care that you are not snared into imitating them, after they have been destroyed before you. Do not inquire concerning their gods, saying, 'How did these nations worship their gods? I also want to do the same.' You must not do the same for the Lord your God because every abhorrent thing that the Lord hates they have done for their gods. They would even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. You must

diligently observe everything that I command you. *Do not add to it or take anything from it.*"

These Scriptures came alive for me. I began to see how I was caught in a snare not of my own making. I was imitating the rituals for the pagan gods of Babylon and offering it to my dear Jesus.

I was worshiping Jesus the way the pagans worshiped their gods. I saw that God did not desire it. That it was not pleasing to Him. When Christmas came around again we found ourselves not putting up the tree or exchanging presents. It was a little strange and there was a pull to participate, but we knew that it wasn't of God. I did not want to sin against Jesus.

I have found since then that there is so much anxiety attached to Christmas. Getting presents for everyone, while it seems that the whole world is doing the same thing, is no longer missed. There is such a relief, where there was so much pressure before. Not that pressure is bad, if it is from God, but we could see that Christmas pressure was not His.

SANTA CLAUS

Another thing we realized quite early that had to be discarded was Santa. Regardless of where he came from, I knew he had to go. In Deuteronomy 4:25 the Lord talks about the Children of Israel making 'a graven image' to provoke Him.

Some of the meanings of the word 'image' are, 'a mental picture of anything not actually present to the senses; a picture drawn by the imagination; a symbol.' When a man dresses to look like an imaginary figure (Santa), it's still an image.

The practice of teaching children that Santa is the judge of their behavior, giving them gifts if they're good, or withholding them if they're not, is unbiblical and a lie. We set up an image in their minds as to who is watching them. *Where does God ever tell us to lie to our children so they can feel good?* And how many times have we been told, and in turn tell our children, that Santa will bring them gifts?

How many times have you heard well meaning pastors proclaim from their pulpits that Jesus was born on December 25th? Or that we're doing it to honor the birth of Jesus. *Where in God's Word does He tell us to honor the birth of His Son?* Because if He does not tell us, then by whose authority are we as Christians proclaiming a holy day (Christmas) to ourselves and the world?

Do we have authority to create a holy day unto the Lord? And if we did, why pick a day of pagan sun-worship? I believe that if Jesus wanted us to celebrate His birthday we would find it somewhere in the New Testament. If not, then it's sin.

When the children finally come to the truth about Santa not being real, what will they think about this Jesus that you've been telling them? How can a child trust us if we lie to them? Would you really trust someone if they continually lied to you?

You might say, 'I do it for my children. Their faces are so glad. How could I take that away from them? Did you ever think that you could give them presents once a month? Out of a love for them, not associated with pagan things? Why must it be at Christmas?'

Your children will give you everlasting thanks for telling them the truth and walking in it. Truth has its reward, also. It's called Life. God's Life and Light is not in illusion. Illusion may appear as light, but has no true Light in it.

STILL UNDECIDED?

When we realize that all of these practices originated in Babylon, we are reminded of another Scripture in Revelation 18:1-2, 4-5:

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from the Heavens, having great power and the earth was lit by his glory. He cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, ‘Babylon the Great has fallen!, has fallen!, and has become the habitation of devils!’”

“And I heard another voice from the Heavens saying. ‘Come out of her My People!, that you be not partakers of her sins and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto the Heavens and God has remembered her wickedness.’”

The Scriptures are referring to those same practices and customs that originated in ancient Babylon. Jeroboam, king of the northern kingdom of Israel, ordained a feast in the eighth month, even in the month that he ‘devised in his own heart.’

“So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *in the month which he had devised in his own heart*. And **he ordained a feast** for the Sons of Israel and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.” (1st Kings 12:33)

God wasn’t pleased with Jeroboam for ordaining a feast which He hadn’t given to Israel. In 1st Kings 14:14 it states: ‘And God will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin and made Israel to sin.’ The gold calf that Jeroboam made was associated with sun worship, too. Does God change His Mind? Does He destroy a people at one point in time for doing something, and allow another people later to do it?

We have more knowledge than they did in many things. The Scriptures tell us that to whom much is given, much is required. If they could not worship God any way that they wanted to, how can we? If King Jeroboam could not ordain a feast, if he could not make a day holy that God hadn’t spoken of, then how can we think that we can take a pagan day, rename it Christmas, the ‘birth of Christ,’ and that it would be alright with God?

The early Christian Church refused these practices, but over time, these pagan practices were baptized with the name of ‘Christian’ and gained acceptance. This is nothing less than a tradition of man. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for keeping their traditions that nullified God’s Word (Mt. 15:1f.). Why would it be different for us?

If God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ had wanted us to celebrate His birthday or His being born, don’t you think that it would be found somewhere in the New Testament? Some might say that God can save people at Christmas services, etc., and that’s true, but the basic question to ask is, ‘Does Jesus, the Lord of Truth, want us to keep pagan traditions (Christmas) to honor Him?’ (John 14:6)

We need to get back to worshipping Jesus the way He would want to be worshiped. Christmas is man giving to God, worship through a medium that He does not desire. Christmas is sin. It has no biblical support to stand on and reeks of paganism..

As you decide (hopefully) not to keep Christmas, seek the Lord for wisdom in how to relate this to others. Many are not ready for this. We need to be loving and Christ-like in sharing this truth with others. As for me and my house, though, we will worship the Lord...the way He chooses.

References

The Two Babylons.....	by Alexander Hislop ¹
The Ancient Gods.....	by E. O. James
The Mother Goddess Cult.....	by E. O. James
Babylon Mystery Religion.....	by R. Woodrow

For information about the Holy Days that the Lord wants us to celebrate, see <http://SeedofAbraham.net> and scroll down Articles to The Feasts of Israel.

Some added thoughts by Avram Yehoshua

1. Christmas is not the birth day of Jesus, but of the anti-Christ, called Tammuz (and other names in other ancient countries) who was allegedly raised from the stump of a dead fir tree in the middle of the winter. December 25th is the first day that ancient man, without the use of optical aids, could see that there was now more light in the day than previously before, and so, on this day the pagan savior was ‘born,’ to show that he had conquered the darkness.
2. The fir tree is a fitting pagan symbol for something that is alive in the ‘dead’ of the winter, and that’s why it was chosen by the pagans, brought into their homes, decorated with tinsel (silver and gold).
3. The pagans used that day, of their pagan savior’s birth, to also give gifts to one another. Everything about Christmas today is of pagan origin. The only thing that is changed is that the name of ‘Jesus’ has been placed over the name of the pagan christ, for that is the term that was used (*christ* simply meaning anointed one and the ancient Greeks used that term for the pagan savior).
4. That same savior was resurrected on Easter-Sunday, known in the ancient world as *Ishtar*-Sunday. *Ishtar* was the Queen of Heaven that is spoken about in Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19, 25. The faithless Israelis were offering up to her ‘cakes,’ which we know today as hot cross buns. The term Easter is just the anglecized form of *Ishtar*.
5. The Christian Easter sunrise service is modeled after the time when *Ishtar* allegedly raised her dead, savior son, *as the sun was rising*, for he is seen as the sun god incarnate.
6. The New Testament is silent on celebrating the birth of God the Son, Jesus. Concerning His resurrection, He was raised while it was still dark. Whenever the women come to the tomb the angel says, ‘He has risen.’ In the Gospel of John they came while it was yet dark on Sunday morning (John 20:1), so we know that He didn’t rise ‘as the sun was coming up.’
7. The Lord has given us His Feasts to celebrate (Lev. 23). Passover, First Fruits, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorate our Lord’s death, resurrection and our transformation into His very Image.
8. *Sola Scriptura* is Latin for ‘Only Scripture,’ and was a godly motto of the 16th century Reformers who understood that ‘only Scripture’ is divinely authoritative, and therefore, reveals who our God is and what He desires of us. Easter and Xmas² are pagan traditions that came into the Body of

¹ This book is a classic and a ‘must read!’ It’s free at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Two-Babylons.pdf>.

Christ through the Roman Catholic Church about 120 AD and 400 AD, respectively. Those traditions nullify God's Word and do not have any of the Lord's Truth in them. Therefore, we're not to celebrate them or else we find ourselves walking in the traditions of man that nullify God's Word, like the ancient Pharisees, who also had noble reasons for disregarding and canceling God's Word (Mt. 15:1f).

Christianity does not have authority from God 'to baptize' anything pagan, to make pagan holy days and ways 'acceptable' to Christians. If they did, it would be written somewhere in the Word of God.³

² *Xmas* is an abbreviated way of speaking of Christmas. The first Greek letter in Christ's name is known as the *Chai*, which has a 'ch' sound, and it's written similar to the English X, and hence, its use for Xmas.

³ Revised on 4 January 2017.