

What's behind Christmas? [Dare to read this article.](#)

By David C. Pack

This article is a transcription of the very accurate opinion of a Christian pastor, Pr. David C. Pack. I quote this detail for two reasons: One for reasons of authorship, the other so that you do not think it is just a Messianic Jewish whim. A pastor committed to the Word of the Eternal, one who cares about what God thinks of us, and who is concerned with pleasing the God he serves, thinks this way. What do you think?

Where did Christmas originate - from the Bible or from paganism? What is the real origin of Santa Claus - the mistletoe - the Christmas trees - the wreaths of flowers - and the custom of exchanging gifts? Many are concerned about "putting Christ back into Christmas." Was He ever there? Here are the amazing answers!

Every year, after Thanksgiving, most people's thoughts turn to Christmas. This is the time professing Christians are supposed to focus on Jesus Christ - after all, it is the season of His "nativity"!

Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer, garlands of flowers, decorated trees, mistletoe, seasonal greetings, seasonal music, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, and Santa Claus are all associated with this holiday. All of these bring warm feelings to those who celebrate it.

I grew up (Pr David) in a family that celebrated Christmas, and it was a big event in our home every year. We didn't leave out any of the usual appropriate arrangements for this occasion. On December 24 the excitement grew with each passing minute. My parents would even brew black coffee for Santa, just before sending us to bed. I always wondered how they knew Santa liked black coffee - just as they liked theirs. After going to bed on Christmas Eve, I couldn't sleep or wait to get up the next morning to see all that "Santa" had brought me.

Christmas is considered by many to be a wonderful time, which focuses participants on giving, family unity, beautiful music, and decorations, feasting and singing Christmas carols throughout the neighborhood (just as my family did every year). All of this is supposedly centered on the worship of Christ. Surely the Bible instructs us to do all this - right?

The answers will shock you!

Why do people think Christmas is wonderful? This one certainly felt wonderful to me. I believed what my parents told me. I had no reason to doubt them. They were simply teaching me what their parents had taught them. I never questioned the true origin of Christmas!

Most people never reflect on why they believe what they believe or do what they do. We live in a world full of customs, but few ever seek to understand their origin. We generally

accept them without question. Most people basically do what everyone else does - because it is easy and natural!

Let's carefully examine the roots of Christmas. Let's see why people follow the customs associated with it. Why is it celebrated on December 25? Was it celebrated by the early New Testament Community ("Church")? This booklet is full of historical facts which, when put together, paint a complete picture. Let us avoid all assumptions and accept only what can be proven!

Pagan Origin

In 1990, the school board of Solon, Ohio (a suburb of Cleveland) banned all nativity scenes and other Christmas activities on any school property, because they felt this violated the separation of church and state. They were challenged in court when outraged parents objected, feeling that Christmas was being stolen from their children and the community. The board lost the case! The citizenry had argued that Christmas was a universal tradition that was not part of religion but transcended it. Christmas was considered secular - part of virtually every culture in the world.

The court's decision affirmed that Christmas has no Christian roots! However, the court's opinion also noted that Bible reading, and prayer is not obviously associated with Christianity - an extraordinary admission! The court concluded that observing Christmas and Christmas pageants could remain because they were not really part of Christianity, nor of the religion - however, Bible reading and prayer, which are part of it, should still be excluded from schools!

Almost every aspect of Christmas observance has its roots in Roman custom and religion. Consider the following admission from a major American newspaper (The Buffalo News, November 22, 1984): "The earliest reference to Christmas marking December 25 comes from the second century after the birth of Jesus. It is similarly believed that the earliest celebrations of Christmas were in reaction to the Roman Saturnalia, a harvest festival that marked the winter solstice - the return of the sun - and honored Saturn, the god of agriculture. Saturnalia was a time of fuss, opposed by even the most austere leaders in the still minority Christian sect. According to one scholar, Christmas developed as a means of replacing sun worship with Son worship. By A.D. 529, after Christianity had become the official state religion in the Roman Empire, Emperor Justinian made Christmas a civic holiday. The celebration of Christmas reached its apex - some would say its worst moments - in the medieval period, when it became a time for conspicuous consumption and unparalleled revelry."

Consider these quotes from the Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911 edition, under the heading "Christmas": "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church...the earliest evidence of this feast is from Egypt." Furthermore, "pagan customs centering around the January Kalends gravitate around Christmas." Under the heading "Natal Day," Origen, an ancient Catholic author, admitted: "...in Scripture there is no record of anyone keeping a feast or offering a great banquet on his birthday. It is only sinners

(such as Pharaoh and Herod) who make great rejoicings of the day on which they came into this world" (emphasis mine).

The Encyclopedia Americana, 1956 edition, adds: "Christmas... was not observed in the early centuries of the Christian church, as the general custom was to celebrate the deaths of notable persons, rather than their birth... a feast was established in memory of this event [the birth of Christ] in the fourth century. In the 5th century, the western church ordered the feast to be celebrated on the day of the rites of the birth of the sun, and at the close of the Saturnalia, since there was no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth."

There is no room for error in the origin of the modern celebration of Christmas. Many additional sources could be cited, and we will return to this later. Let us begin to tie in some other facts.

It was 300 years after Christ before the Roman church celebrated Christmas, and it was not until the 5th century that its observance was mandated throughout the empire, as an official festival in honor of "Christ".

Could Yeshua called "Christ" in Christianity, be honored with Christmas?

The most common justification someone will hear regarding Christmas is that people have replaced the old pagan customs and intentions by claiming that they are now "focusing on Christ." I have heard many say that they are "honoring Christ" in their observance of Christmas, the pastor asks himself. The problem is that God does not say that this is acceptable to Him! In fact, He clearly commands against it! Keeping Christmas dishonors Christ! He considers everything about Christmas an abomination! We will soon see why.

Christ said: "For in vain do they honor me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Christmas is not a commandment of God - it is a tradition of men. Christ continued: "You make void the commandment of God to keep your tradition" (Mark 7:9). Every year, around the world, on December 25, hundreds of millions do just that!

We will see that God clearly commands: "Do not follow the way of the heathen". But most people do not fear God, and He allows them to make their own decisions. Human beings are agents with free will - free to obey or disobey God! But woe to those who ignore God's clear Word!

Would the Messiah, "Christ" be born on December 25?

Christ was born during the fall of the year. Many have mistakenly believed that He was born at the beginning of winter - on December 25! They are wrong! Note Adam Clarke Commentary, volume 5, page 370, New York edition: "It was the custom among the Jews to send their sheep into the deserts near the Passover [early spring], and bring them home at the beginning of the first rain. The first rains would begin in early to mid-autumn. Continuing with the same quote, "During the time they were away, the

shepherds watched them day and night. When the first rain began, early in the month of March-jesvan, a time that corresponds to part of our October and November [begins somewhere in October], we find that the sheep were kept out in the open field all summer long. And since the shepherds had not yet brought their flocks home, it is presumed that October had not yet begun, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on December 25, when there were no flocks out in the fields. Nor could He have been born after September, since the flocks were still in the fields at night. On this basis, the nativity in December must be abandoned. The feeding of the flocks at night in the fields is a chronological fact...see the quotations of the Talmudists in Lightfoot."

Luke 2:8 explains that when Christ was born: "In the same region there were shepherds who were in the field, keeping watch over their flocks during the night watches" (New Latin American Bible Today). Notice that they "were" in the field. This never happened in December. Both Ezra 10:9-13 and Song of Solomon 2:11 show that winter was the rainy season and that shepherds could not stay in the cold, open fields at night.

Numerous encyclopedias clearly state that Christ was not born on December 25! The Catholic Encyclopedia confirms this straightforwardly - in all probability, Christ was born in autumn! A long technical explanation would prove this point.

Since we now know that December 25 was not even close to the date of Christ's birth, where did the festival associated with this date originate?

Now read this quote under the heading "Christmas": "In the Roman world, the Saturnalia (December 17) was a time of merriment and exchange of gifts. December 25 was also considered the birth date of the Iranian god Mithra, the Sun of Justice. On the Roman New Year (January 1), houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and gifts were given to children and the poor. To these observances were added the Germanic and Celtic Christmas rites, when the Teutonic tribes penetrated Gaul, Brittany, and central Europe. Food and good fellowship, the yule log and yule cake, greenery and fir trees, gifts and greetings, all commemorated different aspects of this festive season. Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and lasting fire, have always been associated with the winter festival, both pagan and Christian" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edition, Vol. II, p. 903).

A final quote about the selection of December 25 as the date of Christ's birth is in order. Note an article in The Toronto Star of December 1984, by Alan Edmonds, entitled "We owe much to the Druids and the Dutch", it says: "The Reformation did Christmas a disservice. By then, of course, the wily ecclesiastical politicians had already adopted the pagan festival in midwinter as the supposed birth of Jesus of Nazareth and had incorporated a few other pagan deities to make their power grab more palatable."

December 25 was not selected because it was the birth of Christ, or even close to it. It was selected because it coincided with the pagan idolatrous festival of Saturnalia - and this celebration must be carefully examined. In any case, we do not know the exact date of "Christ's" birth. Although God certainly could have made it known, He chose to hide it from the eyes of the world!

Who was Saturn?

Previous quotes introduced the subject of the Saturnalia. Let's take a careful look at who exactly Saturn was. Consider the following quote from another great American newspaper, The Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester, New York, December 1984: "The Roman festival of Saturnalia, December 17-24, moved citizens to decorate their homes with greenery and lights, and to give gifts to children and the poor. The December 25 festival, natalis solis invicti, the birth of the unconquered sun, was decreed by Emperor Aurelian in 274 A.D., as a celebration of the winter solstice, and some time (later)...it was Christianized as a date to celebrate the birth of the Son of Light."

Dr. William Gutsch, president of the American Museum of Natural History - Hayden Planetarium, confirmed the original name of Christmas with this quote from December 18, 1989, in a Wetchester, New York newspaper, The Reporter Dispatch:

"The ancient Romans were not celebrating Christmas, but rather, a pagan festival called Saturnalia. This occurred every year, near the beginning of winter, or the winter solstice. This was the time when the sun had taken its lowest course across the sky and when the days began to grow longer, thus ensuring another growing season."

"Nevertheless, if many of the trappings of the Saturnalia seem to parallel what so many of us do today, we can see where we take from...our holiday traditions. And, truly, it has been suggested that although Christ would not have been born in late December, the earliest Christians - still an illegal sect at the time - moved Christmas to the time of the Saturnalia to draw as little attention to themselves as possible, while celebrating their own holiday."

The Saturnalia, of course, celebrated Saturn - the fire god. Saturn was the god of agriculture (sowing) because the warmth of the sun was required to enable sowing and the growth of crops. He was also worshipped at this winter festival so that he would return (he was the "sun" - remember "sun") and again give warmth to the earth so that spring planting could occur. The planet Saturn was later named after him, because of all the planets, with its rings and bright red color, it best represented the god of fire!

Virtually every civilization has a fire/sun god. The Egyptians (and sometimes the Romans) called him Vulcan. The Greeks called him Cronus, as did the Phoenicians - but they also called him Saturn. The Babylonians called him Tammuz (like Nimrod, resurrected in the person of his son), Moloch or Baal (as the Druids called him). All these were simply the various names for Nimrod. Nimrod was considered the father of all Babylonian gods.

Child sacrifice

Note this horrible practice associated with the worship of the god of fire (Nimrod, Saturn, Chronos, Molech and Baal) in the following quote from *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop, page 231:

"This accords perfectly with the character of the Great Chief of the fire cult system. Nimrod, as the representative of the devouring fire to which human victims, especially children, were offered in sacrifice, was regarded as the great devourer of children ... he was, of course, the true father of all the Babylonian gods; and, of course, with such a character he was afterwards universally regarded. As the Father of the gods he received, as we have seen, the name of Cronus; and everyone knows that the classical story of Cronus was justly that 'he devoured his children as soon as they were born.' (Lempriere Classical Dictionary, 'Saturn.')

...this legend has a wider and deeper meaning; but as applied to Nimrod, or 'the Horned One,' it only refers to the fact that, as the representative of Moloch or Baal, the most acceptable offerings on his altar were children. We have ample and sad evidence on this matter from the accounts of antiquity. 'The Phoenicians,' says Eusebius, 'sacrificed every year their beloved only-begotten children to Cronus or Saturn.'"

But why was human sacrifice necessary for the worship of this terrible god? What possible good could human beings think there was in murdering their own children? Continuing: "...whoever approached the fire would receive a light of divinity" and "through the divine fire all the stains produced by generations could be purged". Therefore, "they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire to Molech" (Jer. 32:35).

Incredible as it may seem, the deceived humans actually believed that they were pleasing their "god" by sacrificing their own small, innocent children. They believed that fire purified them from original sin. The pagan doctrine of spending time in purgatory to purge the soul of all sin is derived from this belief!

Who was Nimrod?

We must now take a closer look at who this biblical figure, Nimrod, was. We have already seen him as one of the original false gods of history, but what more can be learned?

Genesis 10:9 says of Nimrod, "This was a vigorous hunter before [instead of] the ETERNAL ONE." He actually tried to replace God.

The famous Jewish historian, Josephus, records in *Jewish Antiquities* important evidence about Nimrod's role in the post-Flood world. Note: "He also gradually changed the government to tyranny... He [Nimrod] also said that he would take vengeance on God if he had a mind to drown the world again; and that for that purpose he would build a very high tower, which the waters could not reach... Now the multitude was well prepared to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it cowardice to submit to God" (Book I, Ch. IV, section 2, 3).

Under many names, the first and perhaps the greatest rebel of mankind has been worshipped through false religion. Ancient Israel continued to fail by serving the many false gods that Nimrod represented.

Ezekiel 8:13-14 records a picture of the women of Israel "mourning for Tammuz." This Tammuz (the god of fire) was considered to be Nimrod and the etymology of the word itself is fascinating. Tam means "to make perfect" and muz means "fire". The meaning is clear in light of what we have already learned. Incidentally, in the Desert Storm War between Iraq and Kuwait, Saddam Hussein named one of his missiles "Tamuz." He certainly understood its meaning to include fire.

Burnt to Molech

Let us see how God's people, Israel, worshipped Baal/Moloch once they turned away from the true God: "And they built high places for Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to make their sons and their daughters pass through the fire to Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind that they should do this abomination..." (Jer. 32:35).

Note that God Himself says that such abominations never even entered His mind: "And they built high places for Baal, to burn their children with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal himself, which I commanded them not, neither spake I, neither came it into my mind. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the ETERNAL, that this place shall no more be called Topheth, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter" (Jer. 19:5). Verse 6 ties this valley of Topheth or Hinnom to this practice. Jer. 7:31 connects Topheth and Hinnom with child sacrifice. Topheth means "the drum." The drums were beaten to drown the screams of the victims in the flames.

Note this quote from Paradise Lost, by John Milton, about the terrible god Molech: "First Molech, horrible king, stained with the blood of human sacrifices and distilling paternal tears though with the clatter of drums and timpani, the cries of the children thrown into the fire to be later offered to the execrable idol were not heard." Of course, everyone will say that they no longer sacrifice their children to Moloch today, but read on.

In the New Testament, the martyr Stephen was stoned to death, at least in part, because he accused his hearers of worshipping this evil idol (Acts 7:43).

When righteous King Josiah came to the throne, as king of Judah, he destroyed the altars in the Valley of Topheth (or Hinnom - the same valley that Christ compared to the "Gehenna" fire in Mark 9:43-49) shortly after coming to power. He understood the great evil of the practices that were taking place there.

Druids and Human Sacrifice

Many people have heard of the Druids. Few know who and what they were. We will refer to them later and tie them to other well-known Christian practices. We must first establish their historical role in human sacrifice.

Julius Caesar is the best-known source of information about the Druids. This comes from the Encyclopedia Britannica. This quote, under "Druids," clearly explains who they were: "Druids, the learned class among the ancient Celts, whose name means To know (or find) the oak. They seem to have frequented oak forests and to have acted as priests, teachers, and judges. The earliest known records of the Druids come from the third century [B.C.] ... the Druids oversaw public and private sacrifices, and many young men went to them for instruction. They judged all public and private disputes and decreed penalty...The doctrinal principle of the Druids was that the soul was immortal... (They) offered human victims for those who were seriously ill or in danger of death in battle. Large wickerwork images were filled with living men and then burned; although the Druids chose criminals by preference, they sacrificed innocent victims if necessary".

The Old Testament is filled with God's condemnation of Israel for practicing the customs of the nations around them - and we are gathering important facts that reveal a shocking picture.

The role of cannibalism

Another truth about the origin of Christmas arises from the modern word cannibal. This practice has its roots in a major function of all priests of Baal. Keep in mind that the Hebrew word for priest is Cahna.

Consider the following quote from *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop, page 232: "In the Mosaic law it was a precept, stemming no doubt from the patriarchal faith, that the priest should partake of whatever was offered as an atonement offering (Numbers 18:9,10). Consequently, the priests of Nimrod or Baal were necessarily required to eat of the human sacrifices; and it was thus that 'Cahna-Bal,' the 'Priest of Baal,' appears in our own language to designate the devourer of human flesh."

The reality of this cannot be lost! It is also true that most civilizations have a tradition that has involved cannibalism. Note this statement from *The New York Times*, "What Is the Significance of Cannibalism?" by Erik Eckholm: "Cannibalism has fascinated and repelled virtually every known society, including those that are said to have practiced it."

This same article went on to show that most civilizations also attached divine significance to its practice.

What about the Santa myth?

Have you considered that you too might be burning, and even sacrificing, your children today (albeit in a different way) in your practice of Christmas, even though you may be sincerely trying to "focus on Christ"?

Parents reason that they owe the whole Christmas myth to their children! Christmas traditions are primarily child-centered, and they are certainly the focus of most of what goes on. I know this because I kept seventeen Christmases. My older sister, younger brother and I were recipients of much, and givers of very little on that day - and it all started with the lie of Santa Claus.

Some years ago, a priest in New Jersey told his Sunday school class that Santa was a myth. The outrage of the parents and their supervisors was immediate - he had "killed Santa!" He had "destroyed family tradition!" He had "usurped family authority," the article continued. He was officially censured by his supervisors, for being "extremist and insensitive."

His crime? He told the truth!

According to Langer's Encyclopedia of World History, (article "Santa"), "Santa" was a common name for Nimrod throughout Asia Minor. This was also the same fire god who descended the chimneys of the ancient pagans and the same fire god to whom infants were burned and eaten in human sacrifice among those who were once God's people.

Today, Santa Claus comes from "Saint Nicholas". Washington Irving, in 1809, is responsible for transforming the original strict old bishop of the same name into the new "jolly old St. Nick" in his Knicker bocker History of New York. (Most other American Christmas traditions are even more recent than this one). "Old Nick" has been widely recognized as a term for the devil.

In Revelation 2:6 and 15, we read about a "doctrine of the Nicolaitans", which Christ twice tells His Church that "[He] hates". Let us analyze the word Nicolaitan. It means "follower of Nicholas". Nikos means "conqueror, destroyer". Laos means "people". Nicolaitans, then, are people who follow the conqueror or destroyer - Nimrod. If you have believed that following Christmas is an innocent Christian custom, realize this truth!

Is it biblical to exchange gifts?

Retailers regularly report that more than 60% of their annual retail sales occur during the holiday shopping season. This represents a tremendous amount of gift buying. Most today believe that gift giving comes from the biblical example of the "three wise men" (the Bible does not give a number) who presented gifts to Christ. Is this true? Where did the exchange of gifts come from, and what does God's Word say about it?

The Bibliotheca Sacra states, "The exchange of gifts among friends is a similar feature of Christmas and Saturnalia and must have been adopted by Christians from the pagans, as Tertullian's admonition clearly shows" (Vol. 12, p.p. 153-155).

As with every other aspect of Christmas, the shocking truth is that even this so-called Christian custom does not come from the Bible. It is an irony that people love to believe that they are following the custom of the magi in giving to Christ, when in reality they are giving exclusively to each other! What hypocrisy! Christ is completely forgotten.

The Bible teaches that Christians should not celebrate birthdays. Numerous scriptures make this principle clear. (Read our article "Are Birthday Celebrations Christian?") However, what if you went to a birthday party that had been prepared for you, and everyone gave gifts to each other while you were left out? The idea is ridiculous! If this were to happen, I would say that people are being selfish and forgetting you. In fact, most people give to others at Christmas simply because they themselves expect to receive gifts!

Let us return briefly to the "wise men" who gave gifts to Christ. The scripture that describes this is Matthew 2:1-11: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is the king of the Jews, who has been born?' ... And entering the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and fell down and worshiped him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

It is commonly assumed that these were birth gifts for the "baby Jesus". But is that what the Bible says? Absolutely not! First, it is important to note that they did give Jesus presents. They did not stand in His presence and exchange gifts with each other or give them to others. The gifts were "presented to Him". Moreover, they arrived well after His "day of birth". This is another reason why these could not have been "gifts for His birth" (or birthday).

An ancient eastern custom was to present gifts when coming before a king. These men understood that they were in the presence of the "king of the Jews". The Bible contains many examples of people sending gifts to kings or presenting them when coming into their presence. This custom is common today, when ambassadors or others come into the presence of a world leader.

Finally, note what the Adam Clarke Commentary, volume 5, page 46, says about what actually happened on this occasion: "Verse 11. The people of the East never approached the presence of kings or great personages without a present in their hands. This custom is frequently noted in the Old Testament, and still remains in the East, and in some of the newly discovered East China Sea Islands." Gifts, by custom, were presented to kings.

What could be clearer?

The origin of the Christmas tree

No booklet about Christmas is complete without some explanation about the "Christmas tree". We have touched on the subject without focusing directly on it. The modern

Christmas tree originated in Germany. But the Germans got it from the Romans, who got it from the Babylonians and Egyptians.

The following shows what the Babylonians believe about the origin of the Christmas tree: "An ancient Babylonian fable tells of an evergreen tree, which sprouted from a dead trunk. The old trunk symbolized dead Nimrod, the new evergreen tree symbolized that Nimrod had come back to life in Tammuz! Among the Druids, the oak was sacred, among the Egyptians it was the palm, and in Rome it was the fir tree, which was decorated with red cherries during the Saturnalia!" (Walsh, Curiosities of Popular Customs, p. 242).

Frederick J. Haskin's Answers to Questions states, "The Christmas tree is from Egypt, and its origin dates from a period long before the Christian Era." Did you know this - that the Christmas tree long preceded Christianity?

Most aspects of Christmas are not described in the Bible. Of course, the reason is because they are not from God - they are not part of the way He wants people to worship Him. The Christmas tree, however, is mentioned in the Bible in a direct way! Go to Jeremiah 10:2-5: "Thus says the ETERNAL, 'Do not learn the way of the nations... For the customs of the peoples are VANITY; for they cut down the wood of the forest, the work of the hands of the craftsman with a graver. With silver and gold, they garnish it; with nails and hammers they fasten it, so that it cannot be moved. They stand upright as a palm tree, and speak not; they are carried, because they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they can do neither evil, nor have they power to do good'".

This description of the modern Christmas tree is clear. God refers to it directly as "the way of the heathen". In an equally direct manner, He commands His people to "learn not the way of the heathen", calling these customs "VANISH". Verse 23 adds an outstanding and powerful statement, "I know, O Eternal, that a man is not lord of his way, nor of the man that walketh is he to order his [own] steps." God must teach people how to live. Man simply cannot understand God's ways on his own.

There is no room in Jeremiah 10 to believe, as some have tried to suggest, that since these trees have no power in themselves, it is not actually forbidden to have a Christmas tree. God condemns the placing of pagan (Christmas) trees with this clear biblical command!

The Origin of Wreaths, Yule Logs and Mistletoe

The Encyclopedia Americana states, "Holly, mistletoe, the Yule log...are relics of pre-Christian times." In other words, paganism! The Yule log was commonly used in a rite of worship of a Teutonic nature.

Frederick Haskin further states, "Authorities believe that the use of the Christmas wreath can be traced back to the pagan custom of decorating buildings and places of worship for the holiday that took place at the same time as our Christmas."

The Encyclopedia Britannica, under "Celastrales", states the origin of the flower garland: "European pagans brought bunches of holly to their homes, and offered them to the woodland fairies as shelter from the severe winter weather. During Saturnalia, the Roman winter festival, boughs of holly were exchanged as a symbol of friendship. The earliest Roman Christians apparently used holly as a decoration during the Christmas season."

There are dozens of different types of holly. Virtually all come in male and female varieties - such as "Prince Charming and Princess Charming" or "Blue Boy and Blue Girl" or "Chinese Boy and Chinese Girl". Female holly plants cannot have berries unless an adjoining male plant pollinates them. It is easy to see why holly garlands found their way into pagan rituals, as a symbol of friendship and FERTILITY!

Christmas is incomplete for many unless it includes "kissing under the mistletoe." This pagan custom was natural on a night that involved much revelry, done in the spirit of drunken orgies. Like today, the "kissing" usually occurred at the beginning of the Saturnalia/Christmas celebration. I will never forget always having to kiss my friends' mothers as we entered each of their homes every Christmas. It was the first thing we did. I hated it - but it was something we "had to do". Mistletoe was considered to have special healing powers for those who "rejoiced" under it.

The Encyclopedia Britannica, under "Santalales," states, "European mistletoe is believed to have had special ritual significance in Druid ceremonies and lives on in folklore today, with its special status as the Christmas mistletoe having come from Anglo-Saxon times." Mistletoe is a parasite that lives in oak trees (remember that the Druids worshipped in oak forests). The ancient Celts (associated with the Druids) used to give mistletoe, as an herbal remedy, to barren animals to make them fertile. And it is still known as "healer of all" in Celtic.

Like mistletoe, Christmas fruits were also considered sacred to the sun god. The "sun log" came to be called the "yule log". As a note, Christmas is also called "Yule" in English. This simply means "wheel," which has long been the representation of the sun. That is why people today commonly speak of the "sacred season of yule".

Worship of the true God mixed with false practices.

The modern term for the merging of false pagan customs with the worship of the true God is syncretism. Anyone who did this in ancient Israel was put to death (Lev. 18:21, 29)! It was that serious!

A fascinating look at how Israel thought and believed, in their own minds, that they were worshiping God as a nation comes from II Kings 17:33: "They feared the Eternal, and honored their gods, according to the custom of the nations from whence they had been carried away."

Did you catch this? Yes, they feared the true God while serving other gods. It is no surprise, then, that the next verse (34) says that they actually "did NOT fear the Eternal" according to the way God commanded. This is how God sees what people are doing today - regardless of what these people, who copy ancient pagan practices, may think of their own actions!

Verse 30 says that all this had been learned from contact with "those of Babylon" (among others), whose chief god, as we will recall, was Nimrod (Baal or Molech) - who we now know were one and the same.

Note how specific God's warning to Israel was in Deuteronomy 12:29-31, and why He warned them! "When the ETERNAL thy God shall have destroyed the nations before thee... and thou shalt inherit them, and dwell in their land, take heed that thou stumble not in following after them, after they are destroyed before thee: ask not after their gods, saying, As those nations served their gods, I will also serve them. Thou shalt not do so to the ETERNAL your God; for EVERY ABOMINABLE THING which the ETERNAL ABHORRETS, they did to their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they burned in the fire to their gods".

Many verses, like Deuteronomy 12, should be studied carefully. (See Exodus 34:10-17; 23:23-33; Leviticus 20:22-26; Deuteronomy 20:13-18, etc.) The true God knew that serving other gods always led to sacrificing children to them!

Deuteronomy 12:32 made it clear that God does not want us to mix His ways with any other false ways: "You shall observe to do all that I command you; you shall not add to it, nor take away from it".

These are CLEAR WORDS from God to all who say they can mix the horrible customs of paganism with a supposed "focus on Christ".

Ancient Israel's pagan practices in modern customs.

Deuteronomy 12:2-4 establishes an important context. God clearly says: "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall inherit served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars...and THEIR Asherah IMAGES you shall consume with fire...You shall not do so to the ETERNAL your God."

Note God's references to "every leafy tree" and "their images". There are at least ten similar verses throughout the Old Testament, all of which refer to "leafy trees" and their association with idolatry. Historians argue that the reference to the term "leafy" refers to leafy year-round - evergreen trees!

Once again, let's take a closer look at the true history and origins of some of the Saturnalia customs still practiced today. Note the following chilling quote from the Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, "Oscilla" 3rd edition, volume II: "...all ranks

were engaged in feasting and rejoicing, gifts were exchanged among friends, and crowds filled the streets, shouting 'Behold the Saturnalia.' An offering was made under a decorated evergreen tree, according to the pagan poet, Virgil. Figurines and masks - called 'oscilla' - were hung on the trees, just as Christmas decorations are today. History admits...there can be no doubt that in these 'oscilla' we have a vestige of human sacrifice..."

Doesn't this all sound familiar - presents, singing in the streets, evergreens, decorations, offerings under the tree, feasting and banquets? This may sound wonderful, but it represents things that are truly abominable.

Modern 'oscilla' look like chubby little "angels" hanging from a tree. I myself, hung these little "baby angels" on our tree, when I was a child. At least I thought they were baby angels - how wrong I was! Do you think any of your friends understand what this really represents? Of course, not - but that doesn't make it any less serious or any less wrong in the eyes of God!

Absolute paganism mixed into the Church

One more source demonstrates how all this came to be a heritage practiced so "innocently" by millions - yet far from innocent in the eyes of God. Read the following quote from the Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edition, volume 10, pages 1062-3: "Christianity...through a complex and gradual process...became the official religion of the [Roman] empire."

"For a time, coins and other monuments continued to link Christian doctrines with the worship of the sun, to which Constantine had previously been addicted. But even as this phase came to an end, Roman paganism continued to exert other permanent influences, large and small...The ecclesiastical calendar retains numerous remnants of pre-Christian festivals, especially Christmas, which mixes elements that include both the feast of Saturnalia and the birth of Mithras. But, for the most part, mainstream Western Christianity owes to ancient Rome the firm discipline that gave it stability and form."

Such a reputable authority as the Encyclopedia Britannica acknowledges, for anyone willing to see, that it was Saturnalia and ancient Rome that defined the "discipline...stability and form" of Western Christianity!

This is a truly astounding admission!

The following powerful quote reveals how this pagan idolatrous festival crept into the "Christian" world. The quote is from the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, under "Christmas."

"How much the date of the festival (Christmas) depended on the pagan Brumalia (December 25), which followed the Saturnalia (December 17-24), and celebrated the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun'... cannot be accurately determined. The

pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply rooted in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence...The pagan festival, with its uproar and hubbub, was so popular that Christians were pleased with the excuse to continue its celebration, with a slight change in spirit and form. Western and Near Eastern Christian preachers protested against the improper frivolity with which the birth of Christ was celebrated, while the Mesopotamian Christians accused their Eastern brethren of idolatry and sun-worship, for adopting as Christian this pagan festival."

An additional source reveals how the Roman church absorbed Christmas as an official celebration. The Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946 edition, states: "Christmas was not among the oldest festivals of the church...certain Latins, as early as 354, may have transferred the nativity from January 6 to December 25, which was then, a feast of Mithraism.... or the birth of the unconquered SUN... The Syrians and Armenians, who clung to January 6, accused the Romans of sun worship and idolatry, arguing... that the feast of December 25, had been invented by the disciples of Cerinthus..."

Thus, a pagan festival, celebrated long before the birth of Christ, found its way into recognized Christianity.

Did you know that even the seventeenth century New England Puritans understood how wrong Christmas was? They, in fact, banned its observance by law in 1659 throughout the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Fines and imprisonment could result from being found keeping it. It was almost 200 years (1856) before people stopped working during Christmas in Boston. The Puritans knew its roots and labeled it "heathen and papist idolatry."

Those who "change times and laws".

The prophet Daniel (7:8) speaks of a "little horn," which (7:25) "shall speak words against the Most High...and think to change times and law." This little horn is a great religious authority that tries to impose its own perspective of dates and celebrations on an unsuspecting world, instead of the clear instruction of God.

The Hebrew word translated as "change" means "to transform, alter or establish". The word translated as "times" means "appointed occasion, seasons or times". The Hebrew word translated "law" means "decrees or laws of God". When put together, the phrase refers to an authority that attempts to "transform appointed occasions and seasons into the Law of God." Certainly, Christmas is a great example of how this has been done. God's instruction has been replaced with the religious traditions of men.

The following quote reveals how this has happened. This also comes from the Encyclopedia Britannica, under "Christianity": "Thus, the flowery Easter liturgy has been developed mostly in the Western Orthodox Church, and the Christmas liturgy mostly in the Roman Catholic Church...The Christian calendar is the most widespread Christian institution. The seven-day week and the rhythm of Christian festivals have been accepted even by many of the non-Christian countries. Despite energetic attempts to

introduce a sliding work week, the seven-day week, with Sundays off, could not be eliminated even in communist states, with an atheistic outlook. Even in atheist circles and organizations around the world, Christian festivals enjoy undisputed popularity as days off... especially Christmas."

Indeed, it has been the aforementioned "church politicians" who have sought to impose the modern "Christian" calendar on an ignorant world. It is these leaders who have "thought to change times and laws".

The dangerous power of lies

One of Satan's names is Destroyer (Rev. 9:11). Nimrod/Saturn/Moloch/Baal, like Satan, is the god of fire, who destroys and devours little children.

The true Jesus Christ never was and never will be at Christmas! He cannot be put back in a place where he has never been. But the "god of this world," Satan (II Cor. 4:4), has always been at Christmas. He is its author!

The true God commands that we must worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). This does not fit with the great lies of Christmas and Santa Claus, which all children so willingly believe.

I Timothy 4:2 warns of "the hypocrisy of liars who have seared their conscience." Parents can "burn" their own children, to the point of scorching them, with the deception and lie of Christmas!

There is no "safety in numbers" in this world for those who keep Christmas, because Satan, who is called "the father of lies" and "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44), has "deceived the whole world" (Rev. 12:9)! Go to this verse and read it. Then recognize that Christmas is certainly a testimony to that great deception.

But Christ refers to His Church as a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). Many other verses show this. This Church does not have the large numbers of the respected and established classes of Christianity of this world.

"Another Jesus."

There is another problem with the idea of "putting Christ back in Christmas" - and it's a big one! The "Jesus" that is the focus of this season is NOT the real Jesus Christ of the Bible!

Most have been taught that there is only one Jesus Christ. But God's Word speaks of a counterfeit, and this substitute Christ is identifiable in history. The proof? Rav Shaul, The Apostle Paul warned of "another Jesus."

Understand what is at stake here!

First, consider Paul's entire introduction as he lays the foundation for the warning that follows: "But I fear lest, as the serpent [Satan] by his craftiness deceived Eve, your senses should somehow be led astray from sincere allegiance to Christ" (II Cor. 11:3).

Now the warning in the next verse: "For if anyone comes preaching ANOTHER JESUS than that which we have preached to you, or if you receive another spirit than that which you have received, or another gospel than that which you have accepted, it is good for you to tolerate it" (II Cor. 11:4). The Corinthians seemed to "tolerate this" without much resistance.

Paul, under inspiration of the true Jesus Christ of the Bible, was moved to register the danger of unwittingly following "another Jesus." Consider. Most have probably never even remotely considered the idea of a false Jesus for even a moment - that there is such a thing as a mistaken, different, "false Christ" (Matthew 24:23-24) - called "another Jesus". In the past, this "Jesus" has even corrupted even the thinking of true Christians. This is clear. But the "subtlety" of how this can happen, and how it has occurred in history, is so deceptive - so seductive - that even true Christians can unknowingly fall into the worship of this so-called Jesus. This was what was happening to the Corinthians.

People can worship in ways that represent things very different from what they believe or think. Bible "believers" today may think they are worshiping the true Savior, when in reality they are worshiping a false savior - another Jesus! The whole of traditional Christianity is, in fact, worshiping Nimrod/Saturn/Moloch/Baal. The modern emphasis on mother/child, "Mary/Jesus", including the worship of Mary by millions, is a parallel to Nimrod and his mother, Semiramis, that cannot be overlooked.

Here is the point of what is being explained. Many talk about "putting Christ back in Christmas". This is heard every year from thousands of pulpits and elsewhere, but the real Christ was never there! Just as a person cannot go back into a room he has never entered, Jesus Christ cannot be "put back" into an event He has never been to, and which, in fact, He abhors! (Again, see Mark 7:7). The Jesus these preachers and religionists have in mind is another Christ, one with another gospel, another spirit - the Christmas spirit! - that carries totally different doctrines and teachings.

Can you see the connection?

What should he do?

Finally, let us examine what God told His people they should do, and the way they should teach their children.

Remember Jeremiah 7:31, where God condemned Israel for burning her children in the Valley of Topheth. Eight verses earlier (vs. 23-24), God had made clear what He required: "But this I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it

may be well with you. And they hearkened not... but walked... in the hardness of their wicked heart..."

Human beings do not want to obey God (Rom. 8:7). They would rather follow their own "imagination". They do not understand that God wants their lives to go "right". He wants happiness, joy and blessings to flow in people's lives. All this is a result of obeying Him.

God inspired Moses to warn parents of the grave responsibility they have in what and how they teach their children, and how they teach them. Note His instruction in Deuteronomy 6:1, 6-7, 20-21, 25: "These then are the commandments...which the ETERNAL your God commanded to teach you, that ye should do them in the land whither ye go over to take it...And these words which I command thee this day shall be upon thine heart; and thou shalt teach them again unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up...Tomorrow when thy son shall ask thee, saying: What mean the testimonies and statutes and ordinances which the Eternal our God commanded you? Then you shall say to your son, We were Pharaoh's servants in Egypt, and the Eternal brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...And we shall have righteousness, when we shall observe to do all these commandments before the ETERNAL our God, as he has commanded us.

God brought Israel out of Egypt - out of slavery - out of the customs of the world around them and revealed His Law to them. He does not want His people to return to the traditions, customs, and ways from which He has called them.

When all the interconnected traditions, full of the symbolism of worshipping an ancient pagan god, humanly devised, are taught, this is not worshipping the true Creator.

We did not know that Christmas is from Babylon.

Yeshua, who for Christianity is Jesus said twice, in Matthew 7:16 and 20, that: "by their fruits you shall know them". Everything people say or do, good or bad, has fruits. The fruits of Christmas are terrible. This season leads to a whole year of adultery, loneliness, jealousy, drunkenness, drunk driving, family arguments (and worse), and an accumulation of debts that usually last until March. This problem is so relevant that almost all churches report that their income - how ironic - decreases during this period, as people "recover" from all their expenses!

The true "Christmas spirit".

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write, "Cry aloud, do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet, and declare to my people their rebellion" (58:1). I have done that. Now that you have read the PURE TRUTH about the true origin of Christmas, what will you do?

The following quote comes from the booklet *The Plain Truth About Christmas*, by Herbert W. Armstrong. It summarizes the booklet you have just read:

"Christmas has become a commercial season. It is sponsored, kept alive, by the strongest advertising campaigns of the year. You see a masked 'Santa Claus' in many stores. Advertisements keep us deceived about the 'beautiful Christmas spirit'. Newspapers, which sell ads, print flowery editorials extolling and praising the pagan season, and its 'spirit'. A naive populace has become so impregnated, that many are offended when told the truth. But the 'Christmas spirit' is created every year, not to honor Christ, but to sell merchandise! Just like all the deceptions of Satan, who appears as an 'angel of light', they make it look good. Billions of dollars are spent on this marketing frenzy every year, while the cause of Christ must suffer! It is part of the economic system of Babylon!

"We have professed to be Christian nations, but we are in Babylon, just as Bible prophecy foretold, and we do not know it! 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, neither receive part of her plagues' - which are coming soon - is the warning in Revelation 18:4" [emphasis mine].

Why not celebrate Chanukah and get involved with the People of Israel, instead of getting involved with the paganism of Christianity?

Chanukah Sameach!

**Rabbi Av Ner Ben
Yehudah**