

Does CHRISTMAS Celebrate Christ's Birthday?

Did you know that Christmas was observed 2000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ?—that neither the apostles nor the inspired New Testament Church observed it? Here are the astounding FACTS!

by Herman L. Hoeh

WAS CHRIST really born on December 25th? Did Paul and the other apostles—and the early New Testament Church—celebrate Christmas? WHY is Christmas not so much as MENTIONED anywhere in the New Testament?

What is the origin of the Christmas tree—of "Santa Claus"—of the mistletoe and the holly-wreath?

We grew up practicing these customs, taking them for granted, but *never questioning WHY?* It is time we learned the FACTS!

4000 Years of Christmas

Christmas was celebrated by pagans 2000 years *before* Christ was born. Yet it was *not* celebrated in *Jerusalem*—where Christ founded the inspired New Testament Church—*until* 385 A.D., over three centuries after the true Church fled from Jerusalem!

Why?

Did you know that the pagan Romans long *before* the birth of Christ called December 25 the *Brumalia*, or birthday of the *new sun* after the winter solstice?—that early Catholics regarded Christmas celebrations as idolatrous? Christmas was originally celebrated in honor of pagan gods. It was IDOLATRY!

Every one of these FACTS you can find in the leading Encyclopaedias, in your own public libraries!

Though the Bible is silent about telling us to observe Christmas, or recording any such observance by the apostles or the early true Church, it *does* have something to say about the CHRISTMAS TREE! Yes, it's time you learned the TRUTH about Christmas!

You can have the astonishing FACTS about the origin and history of Christmas—how it crept into the churches—

how the custom of trading gifts with one another commenced, instead of giving gifts to Christ—all these FACTS *and many others not given in this article* are now available for you in our FREE 16-page booklet, "*The PLAIN TRUTH about CHRISTMAS!*" No other booklet makes the truth about Christmas so simple, so plain, so intriguingly interesting.

WRITE *immediately* for your *free* copy of "*The PLAIN TRUTH about CHRISTMAS!*"

Address your urgent request to Box 111, Pasadena, California, or to our London or Australian addresses. Don't delay.

Yes, it's time the mystery which surrounds the introduction of Christmas into the professing Christian world were unveiled.

Notice how plain the facts are.

Heathen Customs Crept into Christianity

No one knows the exact date on which Jesus was born. It has been hidden because God *didn't intend His church to celebrate the birthday of Christ.*

Yet the pagans, during the days of the early church, were celebrating *this very day* in honor of Sol, the sun-god. The Romans celebrated December 25 as the *Brumalia* or birthday of the *new sun.*

In most any public library you can get proof of this in a book entitled *4000 Years of Christmas*, by Earl Wendel Count. The very name of this book proves that the Christmas holiday isn't Christian. It was celebrated 2000 years before the birth of Christ in honor of pagan gods! Therefore it was, *and is*, IDOLATRY!

Notice what God does say *about*

the Christmas holiday season and other customs by which the heathen served their gods: "Take heed . . . that you do not enquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do likewise.' YOU SHALL NOT DO SO TO THE ETERNAL YOUR GOD; FOR EVERY ABOMINABLE THING WHICH THE ETERNAL HATES THEY HAVE DONE FOR THEIR GODS" (Deut. 12:30-31).

The Christian-professing world today rejects this commandment of God so they can hold the traditions of men.

Jesus commands us *not* to worship Him by pagan holidays like Christmas.

Even though Christmas did come from paganism, you ask, "Surely giving gifts at Christmas is scriptural? Didn't the wise men give gifts at the birth of Christ?"

Does Bible Teach Exchanging Gifts?

Although most people admit Christmas came from paganism when confronted with the facts, they assume that giving gifts to relatives is in the Bible. Just where did the Christmas SHOPPING season really originate?

Here's a surprise! "The custom of giving presents was a feature of the Romans during their winter festival the Saturnalia," says John Then, in his book, *Christmas*, page 91. Professing "Christians made presents to their children on Christmas morning, *under the pretense* that they were the gift of the Christ child . . . this age-old custom can be traced to the dawn of history"—to paganism!

Did trading gifts at Christmas come from Scripture? No! It came from pagan tradition and was turned into a pretense—a deception to fool little children. And millions using the name of

Christ are practicing this *lie* today.

Millions of sincere, deceived people spend precious dollars to give gifts to *friends* on a day that doesn't honor Christ. How silly to claim to honor Christ, when giving gifts to *one another* on a day that isn't His birthday at all.

The wise men didn't give gifts to one another! Notice what they did: "Then, opening their treasures, they offered HIM gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Mat. 2:1-11).

WHY were the wise men giving gifts to the Christ child? Was this his birthday? No! Jesus had been born days before! Then why did they give gifts to HIM? Because Jesus was born "KING of the Jews."

The wise men were not coming on Jesus' birthday as an example for us. Instead they came to worship Jesus and present Him gifts because he was KING.

Since Christmas isn't the birthday of Jesus and was *not* observed by the early true Christians, how did it get into the churches?

The Astounding Answer

Following the death of the apostle Paul, false teachers began to lead away many from the truth. Paul wrote Timothy: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and *will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths*" (II Tim. 4:3-4).

Notice it! People would reject the truth and begin to follow myths. Instead of continuing to observe the days God sanctified, as the first Christians did, the apostatizing majority, who called themselves "Christians," soon began to invent their own traditions.

These professing Christians who departed from the TRUTH and began to adopt Christmas and other pagan customs were called "Nicolaitans" in the Bible (Revelation 2:6 and 15).

Who Were the Nicolaitans?

The doctrines of the Nicolaitans, from whom Catholics and Protestants have sprung, have never ceased to puzzle Church historians. They have always imagined the Nicolaitans to be some small sect which separated from the

great worldly body of professing Christians. It has never occurred to the scholars that the Nicolaitans are that great body of professing Christians which has departed from the true Church of God!

What does the word "Nicolaitan" mean?

It has *nothing* to do with the deacon Nicolas (Acts 6:5), or a later bishop, Nicolas of Myra, as some have assumed. The original Greek word "Nicolaitan" means one who is "*a follower of Nicolas*." Who was *that* Nicolas of whom they were followers? God reveals that He hates the doctrine of that man (Rev. 2:15).

But what does the name "Nicolas" come from? It comes from two Greek words—*nikos* and *laos*. *Nikos* means "conqueror" or "destroyer" and *laos* means "people." The original Nicolas was the conqueror or destroyer of the people! That was merely the Greek word for Nimrod—the original arch-rebel who conquered the people and founded man-made civilization within two centuries after the flood! (Genesis 10:8-10).

Nimrod Deified as "Saint Nicholas"

While Nimrod was alive, by his *dictatorial rule* he put himself in the place of God. And when he died, his admirers CONTINUED TO WORSHIP HIM AS A DIVINE HERO. They CALLED HIM "BAAL," a name found throughout the Old Testament. "*Baal*" means "*master*" or "*lord*." It was only natural that Nimrod should bear that name, for he put himself in place of the true Lord or Master of all the universe.

But "Baal" was not Nimrod's only other NAME! HE HAD MANY others. One of these names was "*Santa*," *commonly used throughout Asia Minor*. This name of Nimrod may be found in *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary*.

Now you might ask, "Is there any connection between Nimrod, who was called 'Santa,' and 'Santa Claus'?"

"SANTA CLAUS" is but a shortened form of "Santa Nicholas" or "*Saint Nicholas*." The followers of "St. Nicholas" or Nimrod are termed "NICOLAITANES" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT! So those people—who falsely called themselves "Christians"—continued to honor

Nimrod in the days of the apostle John!—*just as they do today!*

Today, on what date is "St. Nicholas" or Nimrod—especially HONORED? Is it December 25? Yes! But why?

The Romans used to celebrate December 25 as the *Saturnalia*—the birthday of Saturn or Nimrod. And is it any wonder that December 25, Nimrod's purported birthday is STILL CELEBRATED IN HONOR OF "NICHOLAS"—NIMROD—THE FIRST GREAT DESPOT.

Yes, Santa Claus—just a shortened form of Nicolas, the Greek name for Nimrod—is Nimrod deified. It is *he*—and not Jesus Christ—whom the professing Christians serve to this day, and whom they honor at Christmas! And there were individuals in the Church of God in those days who tolerated such practices and even indulged in them!

How Christmas Became Popular

In 200 A.D., Clement of Alexandria wrote that many were *speculating* about Christ's birthdate. In the Western and especially the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire, many sects were beginning to follow a false tradition that Jesus *was born on January 6*.

Even the church at Rome for nearly two centuries OBSERVED THIS FALSE DATE FOR CHRIST'S BIRTH ON JANUARY 6. This festival was called Epiphany. (Bingham's *Antiquities*, Book xx, chapter iv.) The celebration of January 6 was anciently introduced in Babylon as the birthday of Nimrod at the time when the winter solstice occurred on that date—before 1900 B.C. (See page 35 of *The Evolution of the Christian Year* by A. Allan McArthur.)

The introduction of the birthday of Nimrod among the Romans occurred about 300 B.C., when the winter solstice on their religious calendar fell on December 25! That occurred shortly after Alexander the Great conquered the Persian empire and introduced the Mystery Cult of Babylon into the West. Alexander wanted to found one world and one religion—AND THE ONE RELIGION TO WHICH ALL COULD TRACE BACK THEIR ORIGIN WAS THE BABYLONIAN MYSTERY CULT! It claimed to be a universal or *catholic* form of religion in which all peoples
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could find unity!

According to the *religious* calendar maintained by the pagan priests of the mystery cults, each year averaged 365¼ days. This made the year a fraction too long. It caused the winter solstice to drop back over the centuries about the rate of one day in about 133 years. When this celebration of the winter solstice—"Christmas"—was first introduced in Rome, the solstice had gradually dropped back to *December 25*, beginning 300 years before Christ.

The early *Babylonian* date of January 6 as the birthday of the pagan saviour Nimrod was first applied to Jesus by the apostatizing *Eastern* Christians. But this date for the birth of Christ was *not* universally accepted. In A.D. 245, Origen, like numerous other Catholic leaders, still repudiated the idea of observing any day as Christ's birthday. The traditional date of January 6 therefore did not gain a very strong foothold in the western parts of the Roman Empire because certain heretical sects were also following the January 6 tradition.

Then, how did December 25—the *Roman* festival in honor of Nimrod's birth—finally become the traditional date of Christ's birth?

How Christmas Tradition Developed

Bishops in the West, and especially at Rome, saw that by allowing converts to *retain* their pagan holidays, they could induce thousands to enter the church and "embrace" Catholicism. The Catholic writer Tertullian lamented this trend when he said in 230 A.D.:

"By us who are strangers to Sabbaths, and new moons, and [GOD'S] festivals, once acceptable to God, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the *Brumalia* [December 25], the Matronalia, are now frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, new year's day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar" (from *De Idolatria*, chapter 14).

In less than two centuries after Christ's death, professing Christians

were returning to their former pagan practices—to December 25, the birthday of Sol the sun god. Here is one of the earliest indications that Christians were transforming the birthday of the physical *s-u-n* into the birthday of the S-o-n of God.

This idolatrous adoption of heathen festivals proceeded very slowly UNTIL CATHOLICISM BECAME THE STATE RELIGION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE UNDER EMPEROR CONSTANTINE.

Almost immediately, the pagans flocked to the churches bringing their customs with them. Within forty years the celebration of the 25th of December became so widespread that a sudden change took place in Rome.

The last record of Pope Liberius' celebration of the nativity on January 6 occurred in 353 A.D. In the very next year he celebrated it on December 25! This is fully explained in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, by James Hastings, article "Christmas." Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that Christmas celebrations officially began by this year—354 A.D.

Christmas Celebration Spreads Rapidly

From Rome in the West, the celebration of Christmas quickly engulfed the whole empire. But many preachers in the East still clung to January 6 as the traditional nativity. As late as 373 Ephraim Syrus said: "On the tenth day (of March) was His Conception and on the sixth day (of January) was His Nativity" (*Assemani Bibl. Or.* ii. 169).

Here is what Chrysostom said about Christmas in his *Homily on the Birth of Christ*, written in Antioch about 380 A.D.: "It is not yet ten years since this day was made known to us."

Christmas didn't come from the apostles. It came to Antioch, the city where Paul preached, three hundred years after the apostle died! It came from an apostate Rome, not from Jesus Christ. Christmas came from paganism, not from the Bible.

Notice what Chrysostom continues to say about Christmas: "I know well that many even yet dispute with one another about it, some finding fault with it and others defending it." He admitted it was "new, in that it has recently been made known to us . . ."

The bishops at Rome claimed to have accurate knowledge of Christ's birth because they possessed the census papers of Jesus' family. Just why they kept this hidden for over three centuries they never say.

They forged many records in an effort to show that preceding popes celebrated Christmas on December 25. If this were really true, they would not have needed to forge these spurious records.

Forbidden in New Testament

The celebration of Christmas in Constantinople, near where Paul preached in Asia Minor, first took place between 378 and 381. And if this isn't enough evidence against the apostolic origin of Christmas, there is proof that December 25 was not celebrated in Jerusalem before 385. Yet Jerusalem was the site of the mother church in the very beginning.

The Catholic Bishop Chrysostom, who lived in the fourth century, admits that the superstitious "*times*," which Paul forbids in Galatians 4:10, were pagan Christmas customs practiced by "Christians" in his day, as by the pagans in the days of old. He says: "Many were superstitiously addicted to divination . . . upon them . . . In the celebration of these *times* [they] set up lamps in the marketplace, and crown their doors with garlands"—as is done at Christmas time today! (From *Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church*, pp. 1123, 1124).

Christmas became a universal practice in all but the Armenian Church by the fifth century. Hundreds of traditions and customs began to develop about Christmas in every land. In the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, you can read this about Christmas: "Yet the festival rapidly gained acceptance and became at last so firmly established that even the Protestant revolution of the sixteenth century was not able to dislodge it." Protestants didn't get Christ-

mas from the Bible. They got it from their mother church—Rome; and Rome got it from pagan sun-worship!

And where do you suppose the story of Santa Claus originated? And what about hanging mistletoe in the doorway at Christmas time? Where did the holly-wreath, the Yulelog, and lighting of fires and candles come from?

And what about the Christmas tree? Is it mentioned in the Bible? Yes indeed. It is mentioned and *condemned*.

You can read the *truth* about these customs—what God says about them—if you write immediately for Mr. Armstrong's FREE booklet "The Plain Truth About Christmas."

HOW to Honor Christ

Most people are dishonoring—yes, *robbing* Christ at every Christmas season and they don't know it! While spending every available dime on gifts for friends and relatives in this *commercialized* season, they are forgetting Christ. They take—steal—the very money that belongs to Him.

Notice what Malachi says in his prophecy for today about modern Israel—the United States, Great Britain and the other democracies; "Will man

rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How are we robbing thee?' *In your tithes and offerings*. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you" (Malachi 3:6-12).

Many of you have been robbing God of His tithes and offerings by spending *God's own money* in Christmas gifts instead of giving Him what is due. Our people have turned aside from Him, our hearts have gone after pagan festivals—Christmas, New Year's Day, Easter.

The way to return to God and give Him your heart is to *pay* your tithes and offerings. Why? "For where your treasure is *there* will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). You are not truly converted until your **WHOLE** heart is yielded to God. The only way to give your *whole* heart to Him is to let Him rule your pocketbook—to pay Him the tithes and offerings that belong to Him.

Today, under the New Covenant, God commands that His tithes go to His work for the preaching of the true gospel to all the world. This year, instead of celebrating a pagan holiday, why not give your gifts and pay your tithes to Christ for His work?

That is how you can really honor Him.