

THE TRUE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

Where did Christmas originate? From the Bible or paganism? What is the real origin of Santa Claus—mistletoe—Christmas trees—holly wreaths—and the custom of exchanging gifts? Many are concerned about putting “Christ back into Christmas.” Was He ever there?

Every year after Thanksgiving, most people's thoughts turn to Christmas. It is the time when professing Christians are supposed to focus on Jesus Christ. After all, it is the “Christ-mass” season! Christmas is thought by most to be a wonderful time, focusing the participants on giving, family togetherness, beautiful music and decorations, feasting on special foods and singing Christmas carols throughout the neighborhood. All of this is supposedly centered around the worship of Christ. Surely the Bible instructs us to do all this—right? {The answers will shock you!}

Why do people think that Christmas is wonderful?

Most never reflect on *why* they believe what they believe or do what they do. We live in a world filled with 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! Why is it kept on December 25th? Did the early New Testament Church keep it?

Pagan Origin “The earliest reference to Christmas being marked on Dec. 25 comes from the second century after Jesus' birth. It is considered likely the first Christmas celebrations 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 sowing. Christmas developed, as a means of replacing worship of the sun with worship of the Son.

Pagan customs centering around the January calends gravitated to Christmas.” “Christmas...was not observed in the first centuries of the Christian church. Christian was to celebrate the death of remarkable persons rather than their birth...a feast was established in memory of this event [Christ's birth] in the fourth century.

Can Christ Be Honored by Christmas? The most common justification that one will hear regarding Christmas is that people have replaced old pagan customs and intents by asserting that they are now “focusing on Christ.” Christ said, “But in *vain* they do *worship* Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Christmas is not a command of God—it is a tradition of men. Christ continued, “Full well you *reject* the commandment of God, that you may keep your own *tradition*” (Mark 7:9). Every year, throughout the world, on December 25th, hundreds of millions do just that!

Was Christ Born on December 25th? Luke 2:8 explains that when Christ was born, “there were in the same country shepherds *abiding in the field*, keeping watch over their flock *by night*.” Note that they were “abiding” in the field. This never happened in December. Both Ezra 10:9-13 and the Song of Solomon 2:11 show that winter was the rainy season and shepherds could not stay on cold, open fields at night.

December 25th was not selected because it was the birth of Christ or because it was even near it. It was selected because it coincided with the idolatrous pagan festival Saturnalia. In any event, we do *not* know the exact date of Christ's birth. While God certainly could have made, it known, He chose to hide it from the world's eyes!

What About Santa Claus? “Santa” was a common name for Nimrod throughout Asia Minor. This was also the same fire god who came down 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 remaking the original old, stern bishop of this same name into the new “jolly St. Nick” in his *Knickerbocker History of New York*. (Most of the rest of America's Christmas traditions are even more recent than this.) “Old Nick” has long been recognized as a term for the devil.

In Revelation 2:6 and 15, we read about a “doctrine of the Nicolaitanes,” which Christ twice tells His Church “[He] hates.” Let's analyze the word Nicolaitane. It means “follower of Nicholas.” *Nikos* means “conqueror, destroyer.” *Laos* means “people.” Nicolaitanes, then, are people who follow the conqueror or destroyer—Nimrod. If you have believed that following Christmas is an innocent Christian custom, let this truth sink in!